

PRABUDDHA BHARATA

or AWAKENED INDIA

A monthly journal of the Ramakrishna Order
started by Swami Vivekananda in 1896



March 2017

Vol. 122, No. 3

₹ 15.00

THE ROAD TO WISDOM

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA ON

Steps to Realisation I

First among the qualifications required of the aspirant for Jnana, or wisdom, come Shama and Dama, which may be taken together. They mean the keeping of the organs in their own centres without allowing them to stray out. I shall explain to you first what the 'organ' means. Here are the eyes; the eyes are not the organs of vision but only the instruments. Unless the organs are present, I cannot see, even if I have eyes. But, given both the organs and the instruments, unless the mind attaches itself to these two, no vision takes place. So, in each act of perception, three things are necessary—first, the external instruments, then the internal organs, and lastly the mind. If any one of them be absent, then there will be no perception. Thus the mind acts through two agencies—one external and the other internal. When I see things, my mind goes out, becomes externalized; but suppose I close my eyes and begin to think, the mind does not go out, it is internally active. But, in either case, there is activity of the organs. When I look at you and speak to you, both the organs and the instruments are active. When I close my eyes and begin to think, the organs are active, but not the instruments. Without the activity of these organs, there will be



no thought. You will find that none of you can think without some symbol. In the case of the blind man, he has also to think through some figure. The organs of sight and hearing are generally very active. You must bear in mind that by the 'organ' is meant the nerve centre in the brain. The eyes and ears are only the instruments of seeing and hearing, and the organs are inside. If the organs are destroyed by any means, even if the eyes or the ears be there, we shall not see or hear. So in order to control the mind, we must first be able to control these organs. To restrain the mind from wandering outward or inward, and keep the organs in their respective centres, is what is meant by the words Shama and Dama. Shama consists in not allowing the mind to externalize, and Dama, in checking the external instruments.

From *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*,
(Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, 2016), 1.395-6.



RP - Sanjiv Goenka
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Growing Legacies



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Managing Editor
Swami Tattwavidananda

Editor
Swami Narasimhananda

Associate Editor and Design
Swami Divyakripananda

Production Editor
Swami Chidekananda

Cover Design
Subhabrata Chandra

General Assistance *Swami Vimohananda*

Circulation *Indrajit Singh* *Tapas Jana*

EDITORIAL OFFICE

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Advaita Ashrama
PO Mayavati, Via Lohaghat
Dt Champawat • 262 524
Uttarakhand, India
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prabuddhabharata@gmail.com
pb@advaitaashrama.org

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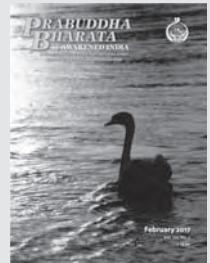
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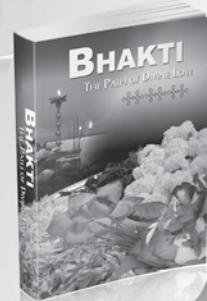
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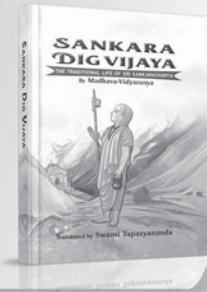
Originally published as the annual number of The Vedanta Kesari, the book explores the rich tradition of Bhakti and different forms of its practice and how one can cultivate it in life.



Sankara Dig Vijaya

Pages: 408 Rs.250/- Postage: Rs.60/-for single copy.

The book is an English translation of Madhava-Vidyaranya's traditional life of Sri Sankaracharya. It also has a profound and penetrating exposition of some of the moot points in Advaita metaphysics. It is translated by Swami Tapasyananda who was a Vice President of the Ramakrishna Order.



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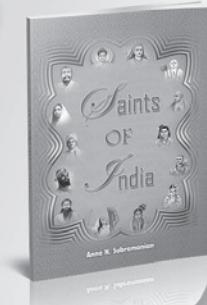
With colourful drawings and a simple and lucid English, the book presents the life of Sri Ramakrishna for young readers.



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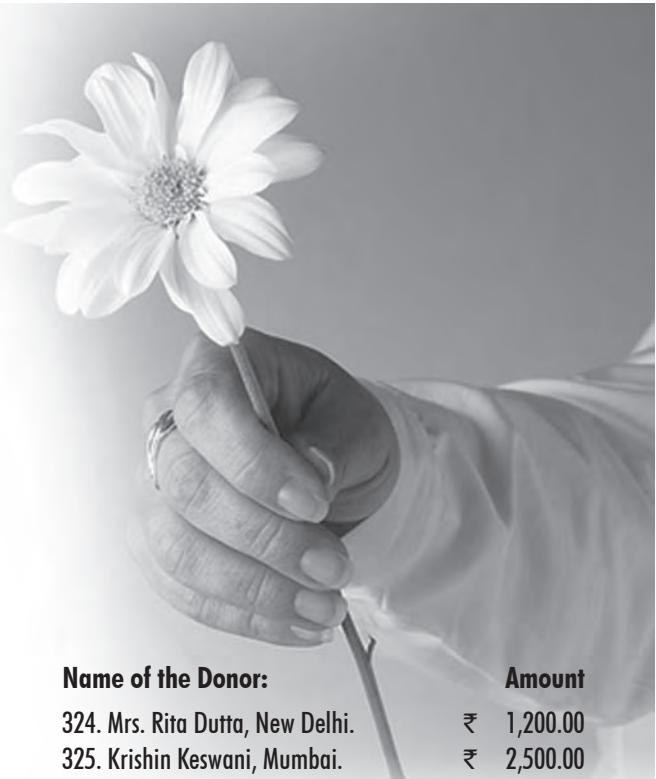
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Arise! Awake! And stop not till the goal is reached!

Maitrayaniya Upanishad

March 2017
Vol. 122, No. 3

मैत्रायणीयोपनिषद्

द्वे वाव ब्रह्मणो रूपे मूर्तञ्चामूर्तञ्चाथ यन्मूर्त तदसत्यं यदमूर्त तत्सत्यं तदब्रह्मा तज्ज्योतिर्यज्ज्योतिः
स आदित्यः स वा एष ओमित्येतदात्माभवत् स त्रेधात्मानं व्यकुरुत ओमिति तिस्रो मात्रा एताभिः
सर्वमिदमोतं प्रोतं चैवास्मीत्येवं ह्याहैतद्वा आदित्य ओमित्येवं ध्यायत आत्मानं युज्ञीतेति ॥६.३॥

Dve vava brahmano rupe murtan-cha-amurtan-cha-atha yan-murtam tad-asatyam yad-amurtam tat-satyam tad-brahma taj-jyotir-yaj-jyotih sa adityah sa va esha aum-ity-etad-atma-bhavat sa tredha-atmanam vyakuruta aum iti tisro matra etabhib sarvam-idam-otam protam chaiva-asmi-ity-evam hy-aha-aitad-va aditya aum-ity-evam dhyayata atmanam yunjiteti (6.3)

There are indeed, two forms of Brahman, the formed and the formless. Now, that which is formed is unreal; that which is formless is the real; that is Brahman. That is the light. That which is the light is the Sun. Indeed, that came to have Om as its self. He divided himself threefold. By means of these, all the warp and woof of this universe has been woven. For it has been said: 'One should meditate on the Sun as Om and get united with it.' (6.3)

THIS MONTH

THE PRESENT-DAY SOCIETY suffers from apathy and emptiness, brought about mainly by a frenzied rush to attain material comforts and make the world a better place. In this race, we have ourselves become uncomfortable to the extent of having broken personalities, who have completely lost their grip over their lives. It is in this context that knowing one's true nature and attaining inner poise becomes very important. And it is with this aim that we need to impart **Religious Education**.

The Bhagavadgita can be used by everyone as a guide for all the phases of one's life. However, its message comes out in its full power only when it is applied to the spiritual quest. **The Essence of the Bhagavadgita and its Significance** is discussed by Swami Tyagishananda, former Adhyaksha, Ramakrishna Math, Bengaluru. This article has been compiled by Swami Sukhatmananda, Ramakrishna Math, Belur Math.

Are science and religion really at loggerheads? Or is it that because of some vested interests, the masses are kept ignorant of the sterling truths that both contain? How can we conceive of a coming together of these paths of knowledge? These questions are analysed in **Science and Religion** by Maria Wirth, who after completing her psychology studies in Germany, is living in India since 1980 and writing and spreading the spiritual and cultural wisdom contained in the Indian heritage.

In the twelfth instalment of the edited transcript of a series of lectures on **Mandukya Upanishad** given by Srimat Swami Ranganathanandaji Maharaj, who was the thirteenth president of the

Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, the obstacle of the sleepy state, *laya*, is discussed and ways to counter it are explained.

Srimat Swami Smarananandaji Maharaj, Vice-President, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, has been asked various questions regarding various aspects of spiritual life by the young and old alike, over a period of time. The tenth and the concluding instalment of the collection of such questions and his answers to them is given in **Vedanta Answers**.

Swami Vivekananda was considered her spiritual master and father by Sister Nivedita. Their unique relationship is discussed by Swami Sandarshananda, a monk at Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Narendrapur, Kolkata, in the third instalment of **Saga of Epic Proportions**.

Many wonderful nuggets of wisdom contained in ancient scriptures are difficult to understand. In *Balabodha*, such ancient wisdom is made easy. This month's topic is **Dharma**.

All our actions bear fruit. Good actions bring good results and bad actions bring bad results. This is the moral of the story **The Goddess's Blessings**. This story is this month's *Traditional Tales* and has been translated from the Tamil book *Arulneri Kathaigal*.

In a time when tolerance is equated with unacceptable compromise, John R Bowlin, Robert L Stuart associate professor of philosophy at the Princeton Theological Seminary, vigorously defends tolerance as a virtue in **Tolerance Among the Virtues**. From this book, we bring you this month's *Manana*.

Religious Education

E DUCATION IS THE KINDLING of knowledge. It is the journey from the known to the unknown. It encompasses all the spheres of life and all aspects of one's personality, external and internal. To educate oneself is to equip oneself to face the struggles of life and the vagaries of the world. And so, every attempt at education should have the balance of external expertise and inner poise. The pull of the manifest world should be withstood by the anchor of the inner self.

An education that focusses only on the external would invariably lead to a discontented personality and a disturbed society. Without an anchoring in a plane of one's personality that is unaffected by the mundane realities of the world, the slightest tremor in one's happy world would shatter one's very being. While it is undoubtedly necessary to educate oneself in the art of creating, acquiring, and developing, human experience of millennia is testimony to the fact that the wisdom of refrain, relinquishment, and silence has brought more satisfaction to the human mind than anything else. A balanced personality is one that has the ability to accommodate like a sponge, the ever-increasing voluminous outpourings of suffering the world has to offer.

Education is often understood as defining things and pigeonholing them into categories that we can understand and handle without getting confused. With this concept of education, often what we learn or teach is not the understanding of a phenomenon but its labelling and theorising. For example, even a basic

phenomenon like the gravitational force is taken for granted and all one does in the name of studying it is to go through scientific laws, which at

Religion or spirituality teaches us to be prepared for the uncertain.

best, just state the obvious. The whys and wherefores of the gravitational force are seldom understood in depth. This is just an example to show how often our idea of education does not bring any clarity but only comfortably covers mysterious phenomena in the guise of knowledge.

Thus, education has been seen as being synonymous with certainty. But, is it possible to be certain of all that we come across in our lives? To begin with, are we certain of our own behaviour or thoughts? Are we certain of our worldview? Even the wisest human beings could not or cannot claim to have achieved a position of such certainty. This brings out the complete futility of our education. And this is where religious or spiritual education finds relevance.

Religion or spirituality teaches us to be prepared for the uncertain. Instead of being a search for the definite, it takes us on a journey to grapple with the indefinite. This is more in line with the realities that we encounter in our lives. And so, the need for religious education cannot be overemphasised. This need has become more pronounced in our age of distraught selves.

Unfortunately, the first idea one gets when hearing of anything connected with the word 'religion' is a sectarian and parochial set of values

that differentiate a group of people from the rest of the world and cause unnecessary strife or conflict. That is why, whenever the topic of religion is raised, people become alert and cautious to the possibility of sentiments being hurt and emotions flaring up any minute. So, religious matters are left to be the prerogative of the clergy or at best, some academics, both of whom revel in their punditry, enveloped in a jargon that ever alienates such wisdom from the masses. Religion or spirituality has a great impact on an individual's life. This relevance is lost in our fears of having to deal with some communal tension that is mostly created because of such preconceived notions. The therapeutic effect of religion or spirituality should not be lost to our society, particularly in these times of increasing psychological ailments.

Ignorance leads to fear. The lack of knowledge of religion and spirituality leads to misunderstanding of faith traditions. Religious education can show the path to peace and fulfilment. When a person is dissatisfied with material pursuits and achievements, one can travel the varied and often adventurous religious or spiritual road. For this the seeds have to be sown much earlier, right from childhood, so that one can appreciate the value of such insights later when a mature mindset is achieved.

Many people are averse to the concept of religious education because they consider such an endeavour to be nothing but some bigoted fundamentalists pushing down the throats of the innocent young, old parochial ideas of hate and seclusion. But such a brainwashing is not what is meant here by religious education. Instead, the idea is to impart some universal values contained in every faith tradition that would enable a person to better understand and cherish the oneness amongst beings. While such education would have ideas or motifs specific to one faith tradition, the goal would be to see through these

multicoloured specifics, the broad general theme that pervades through all human attempts to know the infinite.

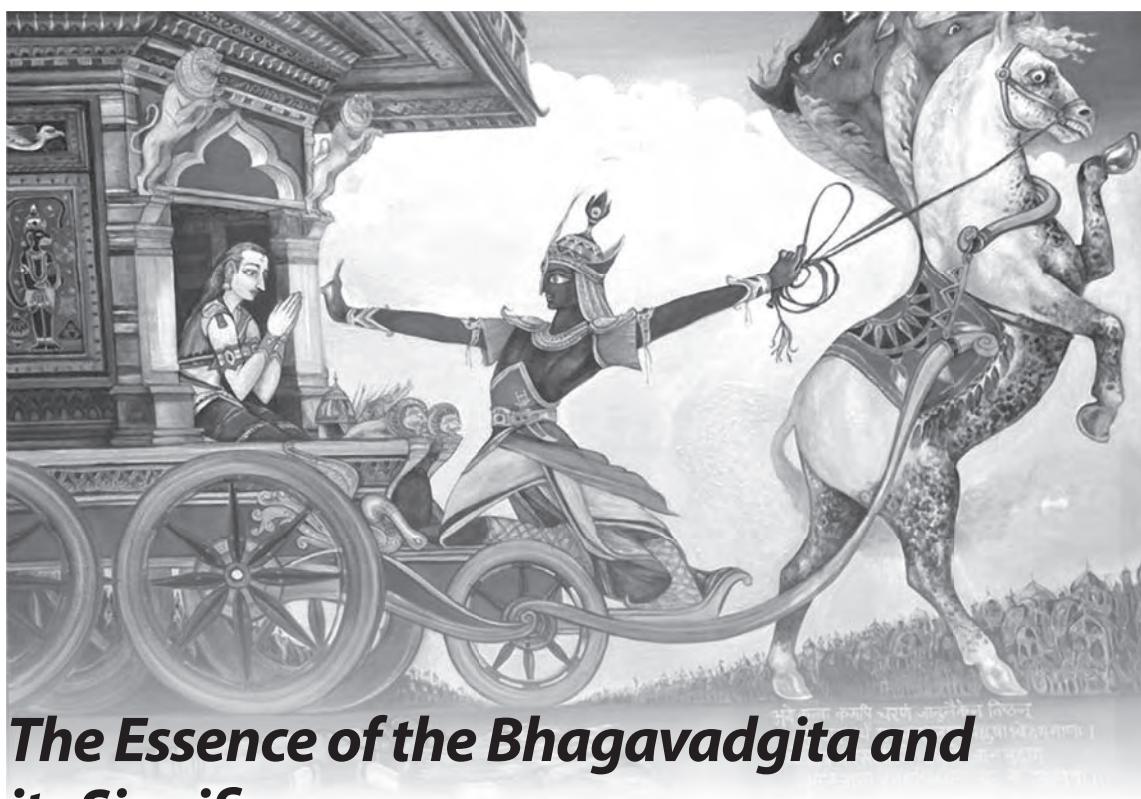
Now, the challenge is to find able teachers who can impart such religious or spiritual education. Such teachers should be shining exemplars of the wisdom being imparted. Actions and character have the power to speak to the inner core of a being, where no language can find access. Individuals rooted in the contentment of one's ultimate nature alone can take the mantle of religious teachers. Parrotting of rhythmic syllables or donning colourful attire cannot authorise a person to be a religious teacher. Practising and getting established in the precept is the only, albeit rare, credential required for a religious teacher. This explains why religious education has become dubitable in our times as a lack of qualified mentors has led to the constant modifications to the message itself.

How to proceed in such a scenario? The next best alternative is to just stick to the teachings of religious scriptures sans the regional or temporal specifics. Just concentrating on the universal aspects of the teachings of such religious texts and honestly transmitting them without bringing down the ideal, and better still, accepting the difficulty of practising it, would be a good way to ensure that the ideal is not lost.

What religion to teach should be a choice given to the student, the young individual. It could be a religion one is born into or a faith tradition one is curious about. A religion should be studied in its entirety, not just the religious texts but also the traditions. One would have to tear open the veil of mystery surrounding such practices and find their significance.

We need to equip the future generations of humanity with all possible tools to counter the emptiness that is the characteristic of modern development. Religious or spiritual education is the best tool to this end.





The Essence of the Bhagavadgita and its Significance

Swami Tyagishananda

IT IS COMMONLY BELIEVED that the Bhagavadgita contains the essence of the Upanishads and it is true that in the Gita we get the best exposition of spiritual life. The Gita is understood differently by every reader of the text, according to one's own capacity and needs—*adhibkara*. The spiritual benefit of the study of the Gita also depends upon everyone understanding it in one's own light, for it is only then that she or he will be able to perform her or his *svadharma*, duty, properly. All the available commentaries of *acharyas* help to understand the text from various angles of vision and they give us an opportunity to choose for ourselves what we think best according to our own *adhibkara*. A person of spiritual realisation of the modern age is a better guide to us of the present generation as the great *acharyas* have suited their interpretations to the needs of their generation.

In determining the essential teaching of a text, help is afforded by the beginning and the end, the constant repetitions, the speciality or difference from other teachers, the result of the teaching, the various illustrations and anecdotes used to explain the teachings, and reasonableness. If we look into all these in trying to understand the text of the Gita, we shall be safe in accepting the essence of the teaching as given to us by Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda, two spiritually perfect persons of the modern age.

From the life and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna and Swamiji, it will be clear that they considered the Gita as the essence of the scriptures. It is nothing else than the spiritualising of life on the basis of the realisation of spiritual personages like Sri Krishna. The two fundamental aspects of their spiritual life are *tyaga*, renunciation and

yoga. The former is the negative and the latter the positive aspect of spiritual life. These two form the obverse and reverse of the same coin. There cannot be *tyaga* without yoga nor yoga without *tyaga*. Wherever therefore, we come across an interpretation that goes against the spirit of these two principles, we have to reject them, however scholarly the interpretations may be. These two however, have their gradations as they appear in different persons in different stages of spiritual growth. The most perfect form of *tyaga* and yoga can be found only in the lives of spiritually illumined persons. The aspirants have to struggle till they realise the ideal set by these experts, as far as it lies in their capacity and in terms of their *adhikara* which consists of *arthitvam*, condition of a suppliant, and *samarthyam*, eligibility.

The Gita deals with spiritual life in all its aspects and each person is invited to take up any of the prescriptions as would suit her or his particular disease. The Gita is called yoga shastra indicating it to be the science of spiritual life in all its aspects. The Gita represents a synthesis of all spiritual practices helpful in perfecting the human personality in its entirety as seen in a person of spiritual realisation, wherein the intellect, emotion, and will are the various ways in which one's mind works and *jnana*, *bhakti*, and *karma*—*dharma*—represent the perfect working of the mind in all its aspects. An aspirant is expected to aspire to attain this synthetic perfection through whatever sadhana one might predominantly follow according to *adhikara*.

The second chapter of the Gita gives the essence of the whole text in two parts. The first part deals with the nature of the human being and the second with one's mission in life. The first part says that the human being is not the body or the mind but the spirit. The second part points out that one's mission in life is to recognise that one is a spirit after conquering the ignorance that covers

one and the consequent ego and its appurtenances that obstruct the vision. The first part exhorts the dejected Arjuna to use his intellect or cognitive powers to know his real nature. The second part exhorts him to live in the light of that knowledge. The Atman is the main subject of the first part and *brahmisthiti* or *stithaprajna*, the state of being established in Brahman or steady wisdom, is the subject of the second part. The first part deals with the intellect and the second part deals with the will. In short the whole chapter deals with Samkhya or knowledge and yoga or spiritual life.

This spiritual life based on the recognition of oneself as the spirit is not so easy and sadhana is required to achieve this and hence all the subsequent chapters are meant to elucidate how this stage could be attained by self-effort. Hence the whole of the Gita may be said to be a gospel of self-effort for getting rid of the bondage of the ego which is the result of ignorance and consequent freedom of action without being bound by such action. The four chapters dealing with the part to be played by will are known as karma yoga, the next six chapters deal with love and devotion to God so as to control and purify the emotions known as bhakti yoga, and the rest of the Gita deals with the intellectual part, *adhyatma* shastra, spiritual wisdom or the philosophy of *jnana* yoga.

As life means activity and all life is ordinarily self-centered and involves a struggle with the environment for self-preservation and maintenance, the first part attempts to show the path to attain a higher life which must take the shape of a proper regulation of one's activities. The first part, therefore, naturally deals with karma yoga, which is aimed at the exercise of the will in the proper control of the activity of a person in relation to the environment or objective sense-world. This involves a withdrawal from undesirable actions and an effort to do desirable actions. The desirableness and undesirableness are confined to the aim of

life namely spiritual realisation and *brahmisthiti*. The crux of this karma yoga as summarised in the second and sixth chapters is the conquest of the selfishness of the ego and this is the essence of all the four chapters of karma yoga. But each of these chapters deals with a different aspect of it.

Sri Krishna deals with Arjuna's predicament with an approach of synthesis and harmony and the teachings revolve around the two principles of *tyaga* and yoga and of how to lead a virtuous life in discharging one's *svadharma*, in a selfless spirit for the good of the world. These two ideas of the positive and negative aspects of spiritual life are emphasised in every chapter in different contexts and using different terms, repeating over and again the ideas of *tyaga* and yoga. These two cardinal principles take various forms in the spiritual lives of all aspirants at different levels. Some may be more intellectual by nature, some predominantly emotional, and still others mainly volitional. To suit all these types, yoga is classified as *jnana* yoga, *bhakti* yoga, and *karma* yoga, but as no one is free from all these functions of the mind, all the spiritual practices have to be adopted in different proportions according to their *adhikara* to help a person in spiritual growth.

The spiritual problem of every individual has got its intellectual, emotional, and volitional aspects as was the case of Arjuna. We find in every chapter of the Gita, the elements of all the yogas in their different aspects. But the whole of the Gita may be considered as falling into three main divisions consisting of six chapters each. The first six chapters are mainly concerned with the *karma* yoga aspect of spiritual practices and deal with how to perform one's duty without getting involved in the results, which perpetuate *samsara*, the cycle of births and deaths. The next six chapters deal with *bhakti* yoga, the development of love, and devotion towards God through a symbol. The last six chapters deal mainly with

the intellectual aspect of spiritual practice and may be considered as *jnana* yoga.

Each chapter of the Gita harmonises and synthesises all aspects of *tyaga* and yoga, with special emphasis on the particular aspect of that chapter. Thus the first six chapters include the element of devotion and self-surrender to God as a means of removing the sting from karma, with devotion given its due place in *karma* yoga. Similarly the part played by the intellect in *karma* yoga is given in the description of the Atman and other things in the first part of the second chapter.

The element of harmony and synthesis clearly runs through Sri Krishna's conception of *karma*, *jnana*, and *bhakti*: *karma* yoga makes use of the other faculties of the mind although predominantly it aims at the regulation of activity through will. In the second six chapters, *karma* and *jnana* are given predominant places in the practice of *bhakti* yoga. The seventh chapter deals mainly with the necessity of knowing the true nature of the object of worship as the underlying truth behind all phenomena and extols devotion with knowledge as superior to all other kinds of devotion. The eighth chapter deals with the aspect of continuous remembrance of God and the necessity of remembering God at the time of death for a devotee and extols the need for knowledge in the end of life.

The ninth chapter also reveals the true nature of the object of worship and concludes with an emphasis on the place of all functions of the mind in *bhakti*. The tenth chapter also stresses the same synthesis assuring that the devotee would also get knowledge. This chapter concludes with an exhortation to recognise all sublime and beautiful aspects of nature as revelation of the glory of God. The eleventh chapter is an actual revelation of Sri Krishna's true nature to give Arjuna a firsthand knowledge of the object of devotion and concludes with a grand synthesis of all the three elements of *bhakti* yoga. The twelfth chapter too deals

with the element of *jnana* and shows the cumulative effect of *bhakti* on all the faculties in the concluding verses describing a devotee.

We notice in the teachings of Sri Krishna that *bhakti* yoga is not free from the activity of the will. The sixth chapter speaks about the exertion of the will in meditation. Similarly, the third set of six chapters, mainly concerned with *jnana* yoga, is not entirely divorced from *bhakti* and *karma*. As such we find elements of these two also in all the six chapters. The description of *jnana* in the thirteenth chapter includes all these elements and we find a grand summing up in the eighteenth chapter, of this harmony of *jnana* yoga with *tyaga* and *bhakti* in the concluding verses.

Thus while studying the various chapters of the Gita, we find a perfect harmony and synthesis of all aspects of yoga and *tyaga* with special emphasis on a particular aspect of it. There are many standpoints from which we can try to understand the Gita's teachings, namely: 1) The Gita's text itself without any reference to external facts; 2) with reference to the lives of the guru, disciple, and the context; 3) in relation to the teachings of Vyasa in other parts of the Mahabharata, as well as in the Puranas; 4) in consistency with the teachings of the *Shrutis*; 5) on the touchstone of our own spiritual, moral, and social experience; 6) in accordance with one's own need and capacity to understand; 7) in accordance with traditional allegiance to a particular school of thought; and 8) according to the needs of the time and place.

The Gita's teachings begin with the *karma* yoga wherein one is asked to perform all the external activities in a selfless spirit of sacrifice as a preliminary to complete self-conquest. The next section deals with the spiritualisation of all internal struggles and ritualistic practices by knowing the true nature of all these activities and their place in the cosmic scheme and by knowing that they are all only meant for self-conquest and self-realisation.

The fifth step is giving up the fruit of all actions and dedicating all activities to the Lord whose sign is same-sightedness and absence of bondage even in the midst of all activities. Then the Gita deals with the control of the mind and we are shown how *karma* yoga can best be practised by learning from a guru of spiritual realisation, worshipping and serving such a person as the embodiment of the ideal one expects to follow. This takes us to the yoga of love and worship of God through various symbols. The best of all symbols is that which appears to the aspirant in the form of an actual perfect person in flesh and blood as that of a rishi, an *avatara*, or a *jivanmukta*, one who is liberated in life. In the absence of such a perfect living person, devotion can be directed towards objects of extraordinary majesty, beauty, or sublimity that grip our imagination and elevate and direct us all to truth, beauty, and holiness behind all phenomena. A person of spiritual realisation is as good as God and is the best symbol for worship. One should not be lost in the symbol as itself being the final Truth. The final Truth of the universe is present not only in external objects but also in the innermost recesses of one's own heart and therefore this Absolute should be realised in oneself.

The last six chapters mainly deal with separating the Truth in ourselves from the ephemeral, separating the soul from the body. Thus, from God we come back to the human soul in its purest relation to the God of devotion and worship as the highest object of realisation. In other words, the last chapters deal with *jnana* or realisation of the highest Truth by separating the grain from the chaff. This is more the work of the intellect purified by love and devotion of the previous six chapters and the *karma* of the first six chapters. The final culmination of spiritual practice is when the aspirant is able to see God in everything and everything as God or as one's own self and then is able to love the whole world as one serves oneself. 

Science and Religion

Maria Wirth

WHEN I WAS IN HIGH SCHOOL in Germany, I had a recurring fantasy. I imagined that some fine day the anchor in the news broadcast announces that science has found proof that God exists. This was at a time when doubts started creeping in whether it was true what I had believed so strongly in childhood, and such an announcement, I felt, would settle the issue once for all.

This was in the 1960s, when science made great strides, for example, in space exploration. Yuri Gagarin, the first astronaut in space, allegedly said after returning to earth that he had not seen any God out there. His statement did not carry too much weight, as he was Russian, and we Germans generally did not trust any Russian during the height of the cold war.

Still, for those of us who knew a little about history and were interested in science, 'religion'—which meant Christianity in Germany—came under scrutiny and we did not come out of it unscathed. My elder sister was one of the first in our small town who rejected officially her membership in the Church, undoubtedly influenced by her husband who did so as well. My mother was very concerned—not so much that my sister would now burn in hell for all eternity, but what 'the people will think'. I, only fifteen at that time, got the message not to follow suit.

It was a big dilemma. I intuitively believed in God, a supreme, all-mighty Being, that is the cause of our existence and somehow 'knows' what we think, feel, and do, but I could not

reconcile what religion told me about this God. I could not believe that he is so unfair, even cruel, that he would let me burn forever in hell only because I had skipped Sunday mass.

The fear of hell had been real for me as a child. I had skipped Sunday mass once when I was nine years old and was terrified that I could die before I had confessed my 'sin' to the priest. I was sure that in that case, I would go straight into hellfire. Skipping Sunday mass was a cardinal sin for Catholics at that time with hell as punishment.

Now, being older, this fear had left me. Eternal hell after a life of a few years simply did not make sense. This claim seemed rather a tool to frighten people into falling in line with the doctrine. Furthermore, why would the creator of all human beings punish the majority of them with hell because they believed in another religion? Why did this God not let everyone be born in a Christian family if he wants everyone to believe in the Bible? Or be born into a Muslim family if he wanted all to follow the Quran?

It did not make sense and I was not interested anymore in religion, even more so when I read in the library of my uncle, who was a priest, about the violent history of the Church and its suppression of scientific knowledge. Can anyone imagine the pain of a scientist who knew for sure that the earth goes around the sun but had to keep quiet because it was politically incorrect to have such a—correct—view? How painful must it have been for Galileo for example to realise that the Church was the sole arbiter of what is true, even if it is clearly not true?

Fortunately, courageous men like Voltaire and others struggled hard and succeeded to restrict the power of religion. Secularism was introduced, blasphemy laws repealed, and now science flourished in Europe. However, there was no connection to religion. Religion did not foster science. Science flourished in spite of religion, not because of it. Or did it?

Here, maybe we should finally define 'religion'.

Strangely, there is no clear-cut definition. The common denominator is usually that religion is about the belief in and worship of the Divine, God, or whatever name one wants to give it. Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Judaism are the major religions. Minor ones are Jainism, Sikhism, Shintoism, Taoism, and so on. Yet why are all these different traditions put into one basket and called 'religion'? Is this justified?

'Religion' comes from Latin and means 'to bind'. It was first used for the Catholic Church. Later, when the Turks were at the gates of Vienna, Islam was also called 'religion'.

Why was a new term introduced? Was the term Christianity not clear? It surely was as it referred to the followers of Christ. What else needed to be conveyed? To what had the follower of Christ to be bound?

Since Christianity and Islam both have fixed doctrines contained in certain books and both claim that only their doctrine is true and whoever does not believe this will burn in hell, it can be safely assumed that the term 'religion'

indicated that the followers were bound to the exclusivist doctrine of Christianity or Islam respectively, over many centuries even at the threat of death if they tried to loosen the bond. They had to 'religiously' stick to the tenets given by the clergy, like going to mass on Sunday or praying five times a day at specified times.

In exchange for this loyalty to the doctrine, the believers were left in peace from blasphemy laws and promised heaven after death. Further they were assured that they are on the 'right' path when there are 'wrong' paths as well. In short, God loves them, but not the others.

Where does Hinduism fit in in this scenario? Actually, it doesn't fit in. It does not bind its followers to a fixed doctrine. It not only allows a free enquiry but encourages it. No blind belief in unverifiable dogmas is demanded. Yet in the nineteenth century, the term 'religion' was now used for the ancient traditions from India, China, and Japan, as well. And intriguingly, all those traditions got an 'ism' added: Hindu-ism, Buddh-ism, Taoism, Jain-ism, and so on.

Usually an -ism is associated with a narrow doctrine, developed by one person like Marxism, Stalinism, Maoism or has otherwise a negative image like Nazism or 'Islam-ism', which is meant to be seen as different and worse than Islam. That Juda-ism, which always was at the receiving end of Christianity and Islam, also got an -ism just would confirm that the -ism is not as 'noble' as the ending of the two 'only true' religions.



François-Marie Arouet
Alias Voltaire (1694–1778)

Did the West try to obfuscate the fact that the Eastern traditions, foremost of all the Indian, had profound philosophies at their core and portray them also as ‘belief-systems’ with unverifiable dogmas at their core? For millennia these Eastern traditions have lived harmoniously together without fighting each other but rather debating each other, in stark contrast to Christianity and Islam.

One thing is clear: Christianity / Islam on one side and India’s traditions on the other are two very different categories: One group makes unverifiable claims about the truth, demands blind belief in those claims, and threatens with dire consequences, while the other group freely enquires into the truth by inner exploration, debates, guided by the ancient texts and saints who had experienced being one with all.

For one group the goal of life is to reach heaven and avoid hell after death by religiously sticking to the doctrine which is taught. The other group sees the goal in realising the blissful truth that we are one with all in the depth of our own being while we are alive.

One group depends on conversion and indoctrination to gain followers, while Hinduism is Sanatana, eternal, Dharma—righteous way of living.

Every Christian or Muslim had forefathers who were not Christians or Muslims. At the start, often the sword was used to convert, as the ‘truth’ of the dogmas was not self-evident and even went against common sense. Later, indoctrination of children and blasphemy laws kept the followers subdued.

The reason why conversion is necessary for the dogmatic religions is simple: Suppose a community on some island is completely unconnected to the modern world. They will never become Christians or Muslims because they need to be told a story from the past about God

sending his only son to earth two thousand years ago, or about Allah sending Mohammed as his last prophet some fourteen hundred years ago.

Yet if these islanders deeply enquired into what is true and how to live a righteous life, they might come to similar conclusions like Sanatana Dharma, as it does not depend on some event in history. It requires deep enquiry into That what truly is—eternally.

Yet let me go back to my personal discovery of a connection between science and ‘religion’.

Meanwhile, I had stopped going to mass. When I told it to my mother, her reaction was, ‘And what if you go to hell?’ ‘I won’t go to hell,’ I replied. If there is a God, he surely won’t be so petty-minded to insist on a specific way of worshipping him. I also had had some inkling that indeed, there may be a God. An article on modern physics had explained that all is basically one energy and the different forms in this world are not really solid or separate entities. Strangely, this made sense and I felt: If there is a God then that one energy must be him.

Yet in the 1970s, we students at Hamburg University were so ‘modern and progressive’ that we would have rather bitten our tongues than admit that we believed in God. Yet it was alright to be interested in Buddhism or Transcendental Meditation—TM—or Bhagavan Rajneesh, as Osho was called then.

I even took initiation into TM. The Beatles had paved the way. I loved those twenty minutes of meditation in the morning and evening. Yet there was a lot of negative reporting in German newspapers about TM at that time. The Church had set up commissioners for sects, and warned one can go mad by meditating. Parents were asked to keep an eye on their children so that they don’t fall prey to the brainwashing of those sects. Maybe, this negative propaganda had its influence because I stopped meditating after two years.

Even more than TM, the Hare Krishna 'sect' was demeaned and ridiculed by the media. Their followers were portrayed as weird, mad people. Hinduism already had a bad image. I had learnt in primary school that it was about a terrible caste system and untouchables. Now the media did their best to make it look even worse.

In December 1979 I planned to go to Australia with a stopover in India. This stopover became a turning point in my life. It lasted meanwhile thirty-seven years. The reason why I stayed on in India ironically was because of the much maligned Hinduism. I realised the amazing depth and breadth of Hinduism and wondered, why it was portrayed so wrongly as a primitive, oppressive religion when it is actually the best option for mankind. The Dalai Lama said that India has great potential to help the world. He is right and the negative propaganda in the West is wrong. Hinduism is the least dogmatic and closest to the truth. If it binds at all, it binds or rather unites, *yoga*, the individual with the Divine.

Back to my stopover. I visited the southern tip of India, Kanyakumari. A little off the coast on a huge rock, there is a memorial for Swami Vivekananda. At a bookstall there, I bought *Jnana Yoga*. I had not heard of Swamiji, but wanted to learn about Indian thought while in India.

Swamiji had swum to this rock to meditate in December 1892. His guru, Sri Ramakrishna, had died in Calcutta six years earlier. The young man had realised that under British rule the people of his country had purposely been cut off from their culture. He wanted to wake them up, give them back their self-respect and pride in their Hindu tradition.

On this rock, he decided to participate at the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893, and present Advaita Vedanta, one of the highest flowerings among the different Indian philosophical systems. Advaita Vedanta is

explained in the Upanishads, the last part, *anta*, of the Vedas, and postulates that essentially, everything is a whole, *a-dvaita*, not two.

Swamiji became the star of the Parliament of Religions. He got a standing ovation, and was asked to give a lecture tour in the US. He was sought after by influential persons, including scientists like Tesla. But the Christians went after him. In his own words at a lecture at the Victoria Hall in Madras after coming back to India: 'There is not one black lie imaginable that these latter [the Christian missionaries] did not invent against me. They blackened my character from city to city, poor and friendless though I was in a foreign country. They tried to oust me from every house and to make every man who became my friend my enemy. They tried to starve me out.'

Why did the Christians do this? Did they fear that people would realise that Advaita Vedanta makes far more sense than their dogmatic belief system?

I read Swamiji's *Jnana Yoga* and it was fascinating. Swamiji expressed clearly what I vaguely had felt to be true. For example, that all is interconnected or rather ONE. Everything in this creation including ourselves is permeated by the same great intelligence, like waves are permeated by the same ocean. The waves may be convinced that they are separate from the ocean as they have a distinct form and name. But ultimately all the waves are nothing but the one great ocean and nothing is lost when their form is lost. Similarly, though we may consider our person as separate from others, in truth we are the one consciousness and nothing of substance is lost when form and name are lost.

Further, Swamiji said that the so called reality is not really real. It is a sense deception, in a similar way, as at dusk a rope is mistakenly seen as a snake, even though in reality there is only a

rope. Truly true, he claimed, is our inner being, Atman that permeates everything and makes all appearances miraculously shine forth. It is infinite, eternal. It is not an object that can be seen with the eyes or thought of with the mind.

'Brahman is not what the eyes can see but That whereby the eyes can see. Brahman is not what the mind can think but That whereby the mind can think.' Thus declares the Kena Upa-nishad.² It is however possible to *be* Brahman. Rather, we *are* it already: '*Ayam Atma Brahma*', the individual consciousness is one with the universal consciousness, is one of the *mahavakyas* or great utterances of Vedanta.

Now this ocean analogy of all being one sounded almost like that article on modern physics which I had read in high school. How come? Did the scientists discover this independently or were their theories inspired by the Vedas? Had the scientists reflected on the profound insights of the Indian rishis?

Indeed this had been the case. The great scientists who were responsible for replacing Newton's paradigm of a universe full of separate 'things' with an interconnected, homogeneous Whole were inspired by Vedanta: Heisenberg, Schrodinger, Pauli, Einstein, Oppenheimer, Tesla, and others, all knew about and reflected on India's ancient wisdom.

The Church was surely not amused that the brightest brains in the Occident endorsed Indian wisdom and she might have schemed to blacken this image by teaching schoolchildren all over the world that 'Hinduism' means a bad caste system and sinful idol worship. I heard already in primary school about 'untouchables' which left a lasting, negative impression about Hinduism. The Brahmins, it was claimed, were the worst. Little did I know then, that the Brahmins had taken great pains to memorise and preserve the Vedas for posterity, and the atrocities of

the caste system come nowhere near the atrocities by Christians and Muslims in the name of their God.

In 1982, an international conference on the 'Convergence of Ancient Wisdom and Modern Science' was held in Bombay and I wrote about it for a German magazine. The program for the conference explained that India was purposely chosen as the venue as the scientific theories propounded were based on ancient Indian insights. This was as explicit as it could get: Indian wisdom helped scientists to formulate their theories.

Fritjof Capra, Rupert Sheldrake, Karl Pribram, and other scientists explained that new research in physics, biology, neurology, and other subjects clearly pointed to a convergence of ancient wisdom and modern science. Scientists, while searching for the substance of things,

Julius Robert Oppenheimer (1904–1967)



had stumbled upon a homogeneous ONE energy. Matter and energy are interchangeable and the three-dimensional space and the linear time have become the four-dimensional space-time continuum that is beyond human imagination. There are no separate objects or separate existences. Everything is related and is in perpetual movement. Fritjof Capra likened it to Shiva Nataraja, the dancing Shiva.

So it was now scientifically approved that our senses deceive us and that nothing that the senses perceive truly exists—in tune with the ancient Indian concept of maya. And science is considered as the highest authority regarding the truth. Is this view justified?

Psychology also got a major facelift at the conference thanks to transpersonal psychology. It was a new branch that was based on the Hindu concept of Atman—the transpersonal or transcendental essence in all human beings. The core of Vedanta are the four *mahavakyas* of the Upanishads, which proclaim that Atman, the individual consciousness, is one with Brahman, the universal consciousness, like in '*Ayam Atma Brahman*'; this Atman is Brahman.³

Finally, Sanatana Dharma got its due, I felt. The comforting knowledge of unity would surely not stay only in the heads of some scientists but would influence the lives of the common people. After all, according to Hinduism, the goal of life is to realise what we truly are—not a separate person but *sat-chit-ananda*—blissful awareness.

My optimism was wrong.

If anything, there were even greater attempts to hide the profound philosophy and the contribution of India to science since the early 1980s and to prevent the layperson from appreciating the Hindu way of life.

Let's take transcendental psychology. At the conference in 1982, Swami Muktananda gave a presentation of the non-dual tradition of

Kashmir Shaivism. The participants were taken to his ashrama in Ganeshpuri. It was not made a secret that he was the guru of Christina and Stanislav Groff, who organised the conference on behalf of the Association of Transpersonal Psychotherapy.

Yet today, in the Internet age, *Wikipedia* says this about 'transpersonal psychology' at the start: 'Amongst the thinkers who are held to have set the stage for transpersonal studies are William James, Carl Jung, Robert Assagioli and Abraham Maslow. ... Commentators also mention the psychedelic movement, the psychological study of religion, parapsychology, and the interest in Eastern spiritual systems and practices, as influences that shaped the early field of transpersonal psychology'.⁴

Not a word about India. Sanatana Dharma or Hinduism, which deserved to be mentioned before all other contributors, is missing. The long *Wikipedia* piece ends with a revealing remark: 'According to Cunningham, transpersonal psychology has been criticized by some Christian authors as being "a mishmash of 'New Age' ideas that offer an alternative faith system to vulnerable youths who turn their backs on organized religion"' (*ibid.*).

Those Christian authors do not offer arguments to rebut the new—ancient—theory of a transpersonal self but call it names: 'mishmash of new age ideas'. They fear that vulnerable youth might turn their back on organised religion.

Why do they threat this scenario? Obviously they do not even try to evaluate whether the 'I'-feeling could indeed be transpersonal and the same in all: whether the new theory could be closer to the truth is not an issue for them. Loyalty to the 'revealed truth' overrides it. The mind is stuck in a straitjacket.

A pious Christian cannot allow oneself to think freely. The Christian doctrine is the

unquestionable truth for a Christian. Of course this applies not only to authors but also to scientists. There may be self-censorship regarding the theories they propose.

Can a pious Christian archaeologist even consider that human civilisation started millions of years ago? How would she or he explain that God sent the Bible so late to humankind? She or he would be in serious trouble. A genuine dialogue between science and religion within her or his mind cannot happen. A Hindu in contrast would have no problem; on the contrary, one is encouraged to think in huge time-frames. Even one *mahayuga*, cycle of the four *yugas*, lasts 432 million years and there are many much greater cycles.

Could Schrodinger, Heisenberg, Einstein, and others have pushed the frontiers of science and even done away with the reality of individual persons if they had been pious Christians? Probably not.

Yet strangely, even today Western scientists consciously or unconsciously close their eyes to the huge contributions of India to science. For most of them, the world ends in Greece.

In an interview with National Geographic in 2015, the Nobel Prize-winning theoretical physicist Steven Weinberg talked about great scientists.⁵ He went back to Archimedes, Aristotle, Ptolemy, Galileo, Newton, and Leibniz, but not a word about India, for example that the Rig Veda, the most ancient scripture in the world, in 10.22.14, already stated that the earth goes around the sun,⁶ yet Copernicus is credited with this discovery. Or that the rishis had estimated the age of the universe correctly. Is Weinberg ignorant about those contributions or why would he not mention for example the Baudhayana sutras, which contained the Pythagoras Theorem long before Pythagoras was born, or Aryabhatta who was a path-breaking

mathematician and astronomer of the fifth century CE? Why are Indians not credited with the work they did, but their insights were often lifted and appeared under Western or Arabic names? The Infinity Foundation is documenting the Indian knowledge of science and technology in twenty volumes and has substantiated many such cases.

The interviewer of Steven Weinberg also did not ask about India, but he did ask about 'the golden age of Islamic science'.

Weinberg, a Jew, clarified that the scientists were not doing Islamic science, but science and many leading scientists during this golden age were actually irreligious or hostile to religion. He might have said this from personal experience, too. In our modern times, scientists with Jewish names are clearly overrepresented, yet nobody ever suggested, least of all those scientists, that we live in 'the golden age of Jewish science'.

Al Jazeera aired a documentary on the great Muslim scientists recently, yet if one looks closer, the source of many of the inventions those scientists are credited with, for example the decimal system or algebra, is India. In India even the steel—Wootz—of the famed Damascus sword was produced.

Dogmatic religions never fostered science. What sadder example can there be than the burning of the great Nalanda University by Islamic marauders in 1193 CE. The collected treasure of the best minds was turned into ash and thousands of students were killed. Voltaire rightly said, 'Those who can make you believe in absurdities can make you commit atrocities'.⁷

Yet times are changing. The awareness that we would be better off without dogmatic religions is growing. Christianity is losing its hold over the mind of its followers in the West. And Islam is more and more scrutinised, too,

in spite of the media trying its best to out ‘Islamophobia’ as unacceptable.

But let's find out why science had flourished in India in ancient times and why Sanatana Dharma did not obstruct it. The reason is simple: Sanatana Dharma or Hinduism is based on science, or rather, it is science. Veda, from Sanskrit, means knowledge and science, from Latin, also means knowledge. Science is defined as knowledge gained from observation and experimentation. The rishis added one more method—knowledge gained from inner exploration. This inner exploration or meditation lifts Hindu Dharma actually above science and the arrogance which scientists often show towards Hindu practices is unwarranted and stems from ignorance.

‘Science is also a religion. It also depends on belief’, a friend who holds a doctorate in physics once said provocatively. He has a point. The scientists believe in theories that seem to explain what they observe. Yet they don't know for sure whether they are true. For example, mainstream scientists still hold that consciousness is a kind of by-product of the brain. They may have to revise this theory ultimately.

Maybe one could say that science is in between Christianity and Islam on the one side and Sanatana Dharma on the other. It is not rigid as the dogmatic religions are, because it is open to change if new insights emerge. But it is lacking the most important knowledge—the knowledge of That which alone is true.

Scientists have discovered the oneness of all, but for them the oneness is dead, without life. The rishis have discovered the oneness many thousand years earlier, but for them this oneness is alive and knows itself. So far, the rishis have never been proven wrong in areas which were tested, like the age of the universe or even the distance between the sun and the earth.

Would it not make sense for modern scientists

to take their claim seriously that the underlying all-pervading, pure consciousness—*sat-chit-ananda*—is the eternal Truth, and names and forms are more like virtual reality. The Truth is not something abstract, cold, and theoretical. It is the conscious, loving essence in all.

It follows that everything is sacred; everything is permeated by *sat-chit-ananda*. So is it really so incomprehensible when Hindus worship rivers, trees, the sun, or the cow who gives so much to human beings and herself is so peaceful with the most beautiful eyes? Is it not arrogance and hypocrisy on the part of Western scientists, when they rush to debunk as superstitious unexplained happenings, which Hindus consider as wondrous, yet keep mum when miracles are ascribed to Christian ‘saints’ like to Mother Teresa recently?

Are Hindus not far more on target when they see Divinity in all? Is it not true? Is it ‘more true’ to see the sun only as a ball of helium? Or water only as H_2O ?

Or take the cow: Now scientists discovered that the indigenous Indian cows give better milk than for example Jersey cows.⁸ Traces of gold were confirmed in the milk of Indian cows which is useful in Ayurveda. Special cow research institutes are being set up to confirm the long held Indian beliefs about the usefulness of even the cow urine, for example. How long will Western scientists mock Indians worshipping the cow or using her urine as medicine?

Great scientists like Einstein did not demean spiritual practices but were aware of the huge amount of knowledge that they are NOT aware of. Lesser scientists quickly ridicule what is unfamiliar to them. Or are these scientists caught in their fixed Christian belief system and cannot think beyond it?

According to Indian texts, we live presently in a dark era, the *Kali Yuga*, where people are

materialistic and their mind power is weak. They wrongly think that they are only body and mind. Many thousand years earlier, in the *Satya Yuga*, *Treta Yuga*, and *Dvapara Yuga*, human beings had a better connection with the spiritual dimension of their own being. For them 'Aham Brahmasmi; I am Brahman' was more real than it is for us today.

Yet the realisation of true knowledge won't come by thinking. It comes by sinking into the vast intelligence from where thoughts emerge. Intuition springs from there. And somebody who can tap this intelligence naturally can bring superior knowledge into his mind and express it.

When the mind is stilled by dropping thoughts, the divine dimension of one's being shines forth. True inspiration and intuition come from this level, and true happiness as well. It is this, our true nature, which we are all seeking in our pursuit of happiness. We won't find lasting happiness among the names and forms.

And how to drop thoughts? In the *Vijnanabhairava*, one of the texts of Kashmir Shaivism, one hundred and twelve methods are described. Maybe they are already patented in the West and come to India in the form of seminars held by foreigners charging hefty fees? The participants from the English-speaking Indian elite would not notice, as they still, like under the British rule, don't learn anything about their tradition, not even about their ancient history.

The *Chhandogya Upanishad* describes how sage Uddalaka prodded his son Shvetaketu to know 'That by knowing which everything is known'⁹ and how he helped him along with valuable questions and metaphors. Today, scientists like Stephen Hawking, also search for 'That by knowing which everything is known' but they still have a blind spot. They don't search where it is to be found: Within their own consciousness.

And no, I don't dream anymore that the anchor in a news broadcast announces that scientists discovered proof that God exists. I realised that scientific proofs are valid only within assumptions that have been proven already not to be absolutely true. The apple falls down, alright, but ultimately there is no apple.

'I am' alone is self-evident. It is the truth that needs not to be proven. This truth is our greatest treasure. It is supreme, blissful Intelligence. It is within all of us. In English one could call it 'God'. 

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Mandukya Upanishad

Swami Ranganathananda

(Continued from the December 2016 issue)

OBLIVION IS A SLEEPY STATE. In the name of meditation you go to sleep, it should not be. You must be alert. Desires may give one type of alertness. As against it is oblivion. We pass from one to the other, like from the waking to sleep; but this is an awakened state. Mind must be kept awakened.

'The mind should be turned back from the enjoyment of pleasures, [suppose you get joy in meditation, you must go beyond it] remembering that all this is attended with misery. If it be remembered that everything is the unborn (Brahman), the born (duality) will not be seen. ... If the mind becomes inactive in a state of oblivion, awaken it again.'⁹²

While meditating, when you go to a sleepy state, awaken it. '*Laye sambodhaye chchittah*.' 'If it is distracted bring it back to the state of tranquility. (In the intermediary state) know the mind containing within it desires in potential form. If the mind has attained to the state of equilibrium, then do not disturb it again' (ibid.). These are the advices given.

(The mind) should not be allowed to enjoy the bliss that arises out of the condition of *Samādhi*. It should be freed from attachment to such happiness through the exercise of discrimination. If the mind, once attaining to the state of steadiness seeks externality, [outgoing tendency] then it should be unified with the *Ātman*, again, with effort. ... When the mind does not merge in the inactivity of oblivion, [that is sleep] or become distracted by desires, [as in the waking] that is to say, when the mind

becomes quiescent and does not give rise to appearances, it verily becomes Brahman (207–8).

That is the state of being Brahman. 'This highest bliss is based upon the realisation of Self, it is peace, identical with liberation, indescribable and unborn' (209). That is the state of the highest experience. 'It is further described as the omniscient Brahman, [all-knowing Brahman] because it is one with the unborn Self which is the object sought by Knowledge' (ibid.). Knowledge is seeking that infinite Self. This has become that in that state. '*Ajam ajena jneyet sarvajnam parichakshate*'.

'No *Jīva* is ever born. There does not exist any cause which can produce it. This is the highest Truth that nothing is ever born' (210). There is no causality. That is the highest truth. That there is causality is a relative truth. Indeterminacy is the highest truth, determinacy is only a limited truth, relative truth. 'The Ultimate Truth is that there is only one entity which may be called either *Jīva* or Brahman. The *Jīva* as separate from Brahman, does never exist' (211). That is the last verse in this chapter.

There is a very important verse that we already studied: '*Atmasatyanubodhena na sankalpayate yada, amanastam tada yadi grahyabhavetadagraham*' (188). It is depth psychology that you get here. Going to the very depth and discovering pure consciousness, Atman. There is waking consciousness, pre-conscious, subconscious—all this is there. Then pure consciousness, which is super conscious, that is the nature of the Atman

with the field consciousness. Suppose your consciousness, my consciousness, in all these—you eliminate I and you. What remains? Consciousness. What is the nature of consciousness? That is what we discover, the rest of all this are limitations. And in physical language we call it field consciousness. Consciousness field is infinite and non-dual.

Same thing will come in the next verse. Knowledge—this person has a knowledge, that person has a knowledge, and the other person has a knowledge. I know book, I know table, I know chair, I know cow—so much of knowledge. What is the nature of knowledge? When you study that, you again come to the conclusion that knowledge is a field, knowledge field, infinite, without a boundary, of which, the knowledge of a cow, knowledge of a table, are boundary knowledge. Take away all boundaries, knowledge is infinite. That is the realisation when you get the knowledge of the Atman because the Atman is of the nature of pure knowledge or pure consciousness—*satyam, jnanam, anantam, brahma*. Infinite truth, infinite knowledge is Brahman, is Atman. So here it says that when you realise the Atman, '*atmasatya anubodhena*', when you have the realisation of the truth of the Atman then the mind ceases to flicker, the mind ceases to make imagination. When the Atman is not known, we imagine this that, this that, this that—everything. Here, the mind ceases to imagine and when it does so, it ceases to be mind. It dies. Mind dies. It is a no-mind state. In Zen, you achieve no mind, very interesting.

In Western philosophy, these things are all extremely new. They are only quarrelling, fighting. Matter, mind, mind, matter, constantly fighting. Matter means materialism; mind means idealism, constantly fighting. So what is the definition they will say? What is matter? What is mind? So, what is mind? No matter. What is matter?

Never mind. This is how they make fun in speculative philosophy. So leaving all that speculation aside, if you could go deep into consciousness, which is your consciousness, you begin to lose boundaries. In the waking state you have got lot of boundaries for your consciousness. In dream, that boundary becomes quite different. In sleep, all boundaries go. And in the knowledge of the Atman all boundaries go. Knowledge shines or Atman shines or you shine as pure consciousness. That is your nature. Then this mind which never deals with the Atman and which could only see the object, so it could imagine this, imagine that the mind is full of vibrations or waves. In this state, all the waves subside. When the waves subside, the mind also subsides. '*Amanastam tada yadi*'? Then you achieve the state of no-mind. *Amana* means no mind. '*Grahyabbhave tadagraham*'? When does it become no-mind? When there is nothing to cognise for the mind, mind ceases to be mind. When there is something to cognise as an object, then mind is mind but when there is nothing to cognise, mind ceases to be mind. Even in sleep, the mind ceases to be mind as there is nothing to cognise. But in dream, it cognises, in waking, it cognises; so mind functions. When all these states change, when the Atman is realised, the mind ceases to be mind. '*Grahyabbhave tadagraha*'? When there is no object to cognise, mind becomes content-less pure consciousness. Content-less consciousness is known as samadhi, transcendental samadhi.

The next *shloka* only explains this further. '*Akalpakam ajam jnanam*'? *Jnanam* is *akalpakam*. Unborn, *ajam* means unborn. Knowledge, which is unborn. Beyond causality is that knowledge, that is why it is infinite. Below causality it is all finite, above causality it is infinite. So *ajam*, unborn. *Akalpakam*, free from all imagination. *Jnanam*, which is free from imagination. These flickerings of *jnana* are not there. *Jneyabbinnam*,

it is one with the object of knowledge. This *jnana* becomes non-separate from Brahman, which is the object of knowledge. Brahman is the object of knowledge. *Brahmajneyam* involves the three words—*jnana*, *jneya*, and *jnata*. *Jnana* is knowledge, *jneya* is the object of knowledge, and *jnata* is the knower of knowledge. Three words—*jnana*, *jneya*, and *jnata*. In this realisation, you break these three, these three divisions you break, and what remains? Pure knowledge alone remains. *Jnana* remains, and *jneya* and *jnata* become merged in *jnana* itself. Like all objects become merged in the field, in the electromagnetic field or in the quantum field. Here it is pure consciousness field. So ‘*akalpakam ajam jnanam jneyabhinnam prachakshate*.’ *Brahmajneyam*, the object of knowledge is Brahman. *Jneyam* means the object of knowledge, that is Brahman. What is that? *Ajam*, it is unborn, *nityam*, eternal. Then what happens? ‘*Ajeya ajam vibudhyate*.’ The unborn realises the unborn. The causeless realises the causeless. Cause cannot realise causeless. Cause can realise cause. The causeless alone can realise the causeless. That is a beautiful idea. Even in Eckhart, these dangerous passages are there for which he was ordered before the Inquisition. God in me recognises that lord is there. That is what he said.⁹³ A dangerous thing to say. God in me? Christians never say that! They say, ‘I am a foolish sinner.’ That is how you must be all the time. So, when Eckhart made that statement, it was very dangerous.

‘*Ajena ajam vibudhyate*.’ The birthless knows the birthless. The birthless is known only by the birthless or the causeless is known only by the causeless. Caused mind cannot understand the causeless. The mind, which is subject to cause, that is our mind, it cannot understand. This mind must be transformed into the causeless. That is why pure mind is same as pure *buddhi*, which is the same as pure Atman. Pure water

poured into pure water remains pure water. The *Katha Upanishad* says: ‘*Yathodakam shudhhe shuddham asiktam tadrigeva bhavati, evam munervijanata atma bhavati gautama*; O Gautama, as pure water poured on pure water becomes verily the same, so also does become the Self of the person of knowledge who is given to deliberation (on the Self).’⁹⁴ Thus the mind as the knower of the Atman becomes merged in the object of knowledge itself. There is no separate mind. This was pure, that was pure. Pure becomes mixed with pure. That is the language. ‘*Ajena ajam vibudhyate*.’ It is the uncaused that realises the uncaused.

Now comes the fourth chapter; its title is very interesting, *Alatasanti Prakarana*, the section dealing with the quenching of the firebrand. This causal change is a firebrand, you quench it. The whole subject of causality is discussed in this section. It begins with a wonderful statement. ‘*Jnanena akasha kalpena dharmanyogaganopaman, jneya abhinnena sambuddhas-tam vande dvipadam varam*.’ *Varam* means *shreshtham*, most excellent, among *dvipadam*, those who have two feet, that means a human being. *Dvipadam* means a biped. Man is a biped. A bird is a biped. So, a bird also has got the same name, *dvipada*. So, I salute the greatest among bipeds or human beings. Why? He has realised this profound truth. What kind of truth? *Jnanena akasha kalpena*. This knowledge was infinite like the sky, unbounded by the sky. What is the knowledge of a petty sectarian denominational religion, you find out. Small, as I told you, chicken brain they have. That mind, which sees differences, quarrels, fights, what a small mind! In a small town, old town, with five-foot wide roads, where no sunlight ever penetrates, you live there, you rear there, and you die there. They have never seen the infinite world. Take that fellow out into the vast open

spaces and what a joy he experiences! Take him up the sky, what a joy! That kind of thing. From that limited mind, you develop an unlimited mind. *Jnanena akasha kalpena*, jnana which is infinitely expansive like space, that kind of jnana. *Dharmanyo gaganopaman sambuddha*, with that jnana understand or realise the nature of all these entities here. All these dharmas. What are they? Each one of them is infinite. From this infinite jnana, you are realising the infinite nature of these various entities. *Gaganopaman* means infinite like the sky. And, *jneya abhinnena sambuddha*, you realise them as non-separate from the object of knowledge, namely Brahman. All these entities are one with Brahman. Each one of them is infinite. You realise it: My mind must be also infinite. Knowledge must be infinite. Those who understood this truth I salute that being. 'Tvam vande dvipadam varam.' That great knower of Brahman, who has realised this truth, he is a human being, he is a biped animal, I salute him, he says.

'The proposition regarding *Advaita* (as the Supreme Truth) has been based upon scriptural evidence, by determining the nature of *Aum*. That proposition has been established by proving the unreality of the distinction implied by the external objects (of experience) [in the second chapter]. Again the third chapter dealing with *Advaita* has directly established the proposition on the authority of scripture and reason with the concluding statement that "This alone is the Ultimate Truth."⁹⁵ *Etat tad uttamam satyam*. This is the highest truth, the ultimate Truth where there is no causality. That which is non-causal is the ultimate Truth, that which is causal is only relative truth. That is what we established in the third chapter.

'At the end of the previous chapter it has been hinted that the opinions of the dualists and the nihilists, who are opposed to the philosophy of

Advaita which gives the true import of the scriptures, bear the name of true philosophy. But that is not true because of their mutual contradictions and also because of their being vitiated by attachment to their own opinions and aversion to those of others' (ibid.). I must attach to my own creed and for that I must abuse other creeds. They are all false, I must say. In this way, they conflict with each other. With all the conflicts in such systems we Advaitins have no quarrels. He said this earlier.

The philosophy of *Advaita* has been extolled as the true philosophy on account of its being free from any vitiation (referred to above regarding the theories of the dualists and nihilists). Now is undertaken the chapter styled *Alātaśānti* (i.e., on the quenching of the firebrand) in order to conclude the final examination for the establishment of the philosophy of *Advaita* ... which is done by showing here in detail that other systems cannot be said to be true philosophy [because of their inherent limitations and mutual contradictions] ... The first verse has for its purpose the salutation to the promulgator of the philosophy of *Advaita*, conceiving him as identical with the *Advaita* Truth. [Whoever has realised that truth becomes that, those who know Brahman, become Brahman.] The salutation to the teacher is made in commencing a scripture in order to bring the undertaking to a successful end. The word '*Ākāśakalpa*' in the text means resembling *Ākāśa* [or space], that is to say, slightly different from *Ākāśa*. [*Kalpa* means slightly different, almost.] What is the purpose of such knowledge which resembles *Ākāśa*? By such *Knowledge* is known the nature of the *Dharmas* (i.e., the attributes of *Ātman*). The attributes are the same as the substance. What is the nature of these *Dharmas*? They also can be known by the analogy of *Ākāśa*, that is to say, these *Dharmas* also resemble *Ākāśa*. The word '*Jñeyābhinna*' in the text is another attribute of '*Jñānam*' or *Knowledge* and means that this knowledge is not separate from the

Ātmans (Jīvas), which are the objects of knowledge (212-3).

That is the nature of the Atman. Just like in the world you can see a substance and its attributes, as if they are different. In the case of the Atman, it is one and the same. Knowledge is the nature of the Atman. Like in the case of fire, fieriness is the nature of fire. 'This identity of the knowledge and the knowable is like the identity of fire and heat and the sun and its light. I bow to the God, known as *Nārāyaṇa*' (213). This is the *dvipadām varam*, the greatest among the human beings. Who is he? It is Narayana who promulgated this great philosophy. That temple of Badrinath, 180 miles from Rishikesh in the Himalayas, that temple is the famous temple of Narayana, ever in samadhi, is there with his companion, a human being as Nara. Nara means man. Narayana and Nara are two companions. 'I bow down to the God, known as the *Nārāyaṇa*, who by knowledge, non-different from nature of *Ātman* (the object of knowledge) and which resembles *Ākāśa*, knew the *Dharmas* which, again, may be compared to *Ākāśa*' (ibid.). 'Om purnamadah purnamidam purnat purnamudachyate, purnasya purnamadaya purnamevavashishyate; that is infinite, this is infinite, infinite has come from the infinite. Infinite having come from the infinite, infinite alone remains.' That is a famous verse.

The import of the words '*Dvipadām Varam*' (Supreme among the bipeds), is that *Nārāyaṇa* is the greatest of all men, characterised by two legs, that is to say, He is the '*Puruṣottama*', the best of all men. [*Purusha* means a person.] By the adoration of the teacher it is implied that the purpose of this chapter is to establish, by the refutation of the opposite views, *Advaita* which gives the philosophy of the Ultimate Reality, characterised by the identity of the knower, knowledge and the object of knowledge (213-4).

Jnana, jneya, and jnata. You break this distinction and that breaking of this distinction is the object of Vedanta. Technically it is called *triputi-bheda*, the threefold relation—knowledge, knower, known. You break this and establish one infinite ocean of knowledge in which knowledge, knower, and known are only so many waves. That is technically called *triputi-bheda* in Sanskrit.

Purusha here means only a person, and the same *purusha* in me and in you is called the *jīva*. The meaning of the word *purusha* depends on the context. If simply the word *purusha* is used, it means a person or the supreme Person. The word *uttama* means supreme. You are a person, I am a person, and there is supreme Person. You are a person, I am a person, and therefore there is a supreme Person, over and above you. *Purushottama* means the supreme person, the best. *Uttama* means supreme, the best. *Uttama, madhyama, adhama*, the best, the middle league, the worst. From Narayana, the philosophy has been handed down to Gaudapada.

The next *shloka* is another wonderful expression of the nature of this philosophy. '*Asparshayogo vai nama sarvasatvasukho hitah, avivado'viruddhashchā deshitastam namamyaham.*' 'I salute this yoga known as *Asparsha Yoga*.' Various types of yoga there are—*hatha* yoga, *raja* yoga, like that. This is called *Asparsha Yoga*. *Sparsha* means touch; *asparsha* means no touch, the philosophy of the no touch, means philosophy of non-duality. There is nothing to touch, you touch only yourself. It is a new name. Only here you get this word, *Asparsha Yoga*.

It is a wonderful new name. Free from all touch, which implies duality. 'I salute this yoga known as *Asparsha Yoga*, taught through the scripture.' The word *vai* means it is well known. *Asparsha yogo vai nama*, this philosophy is well known as *Asparsha Yoga*. *Deshika*, teacher. *Deshitah*, taught. *Adesha*, teaching. Taught through

the scripture, the yoga which promotes. What is the greatness of this yoga? Because, it promotes the happiness and welfare of all beings. Not a sect, not a race, it conduces the happiness and the welfare of all beings. If the United Nations is to have a philosophy it must be only this because it must deal with all beings. And then which is free from strife and conflict. This constant sectarian conflict, contradiction is affecting people. Advaita can provide the solution because it is comprehensive. Advaitic Christianity will treat all Christian denominations as its own. But there is no Advaitic Christianity. That's why no Pope visits the Canterbury Church or any other such church. But it is dangerous to have an Advaitic Christianity of that type. All the other religions will be one and they will be aggressive on them. Advaitic Christianity must be Advaitic to all. Then only it would be truly Advaitic.

'Now, salutation is made to the *Yoga* taught by the *Advaita* philosophy, in order to extol it. The word *Asparśayoga* in the text means the *Yoga* which is always and in all respects free from *sparsa* or relationship with anything and which is of the same nature as Brahman. This *Yoga* is well known as the *Asparśayoga* to all Knowers of Brahman. This *Yoga* is conducive to the happiness of all beings' (215). That is an extraordinary ideal. Don't want harm to any being, everyone must prosper, everyone must be happy. There is a prayer in Sanskrit: *Sarve bhavantu sukhinah*; let all beings be happy. *Sarve santu niramayah*; let all beings be free from mental and physical ailments. *Sarve bhadrani pasbyantu*; let all people perceive what is auspicious. *Ma kashchit duhkhabhag bhavet*; that none is subject to suffering. That is the prayer of the Advaitic.

'There are certain forms of *Yoga* such as *Tapas* or austerity, which though conducive to the supreme happiness, are associated with misery' (ibid.). Standing in the hot sun, standing on

one leg—all these various austerities are there as *tapas*. This is not that yoga; it does not involve such kind of torture as austerity. 'But this is not of that kind. Then what is its nature? It tends to the *happiness of all* beings. It may however be contended that the enjoyment of certain desires gives pleasure but certainly does not tend to one's well-being. But this *Asparśayoga* conduces to both happiness and well-being' (215-6).

Something may feel happy but not lead to well-being just like taking drugs. Very pleasant, you get a good kick, but really it is not good for you. So you must seek both well-being and happiness. 'For, it never changes its nature, this Advaitic knowledge. Moreover, this *Yoga* is free from strife, that is to say, in it there is no room for any passage-at-words [for quarrelling, abusing—that kind of thing, and finally fighting], which is inevitable in all disputes consisting of two opposite sides' (216).

As I told you there are lesser quarrels among scientists in conference than among theologians. They fight quickly, quickly hot they become, not so in science because truth is the objective, and it is still more in Vedanta. We want to know the truth. Do you want to say this, alright have it, that is your way. There is a place for you. Romain Rolland said that whether science accepts Vedanta or not, Vivekananda's Vedanta has a great place for science in it.⁹⁶ This is Romain Rolland's statement. A big circle can include a small circle; a small circle cannot include a big circle.

So what is the nature of it? Philosophy which is lofty, it must be all-inclusive. Any exclusive philosophy is partial. You have no place for my thinking. 'Unless you become a Catholic, I won't accept.' Then, what is the use? Can you accept me as I am? 'No, impossible. Come this way. There is only one way. No other way.' All that is narrow mind. This mind says no, you have to follow us. You are a doubter, I accept. Your doubt is more

welcome than holy speech. There is more true religion in honest doubt than in all your creed.⁹⁷ That is a famous English line. Honest doubt, 'Why so? For, it is non-contradictory in nature.'⁹⁸ This teaching does not contradict. There is no second thing to contradict. Everything is my Self. 'To this kind of *Yoga*, taught in the scripture, I bow. [Salutation to the philosophy that is mentioned here.] ... One who knows everything as his own self does not contradict others. For, one cannot contradict his own self' (ibid.). The word 'yoga' means contact. So, it is called the touch of the non-touch. 'Yoga' means touch or union and the other is non-touch, so touch of the non-touch. Now comes the discussion.

'Quarrelling among themselves, some disputants postulate that an existing entity undergoes evolution, whereas other disputants, proud of their understanding, maintain that evolution proceeds from a non-existing entity' (ibid.). Two things are there: the non-existing entity producing evolution, the existing entity experiencing evolution. No causality. Evolution here is in the sense of causality. So, the dualists quarrel with one another. 'Some disputants, such as the followers of the *Sāṃkhya* system admit production as the effect of an entity that is already an existent. [They speak of *satkaryavada*, an effect comes only from a pre-existing cause.] But this is not the view of all the dualists. For the intelligent followers of the *Nyāya* and the *Vaiśeṣika* systems, that is to say, those who believe that they possess wisdom, maintain that evolution proceeds from a non-existing cause' (217). That is their idea. That is why they could not sustain anything. Scientific thought won't accept it. From nothing, nothing comes. Only from something, something can come. 'The meaning is that these disputants, quarrelling among themselves, claim victory over their respective opponents. ... The existent-cannot (again) pass

into (birth) existence. Nor can the non-existent be born or come into being as existent. Thus disputing among themselves, they, as a matter of fact tend to establish the *Advaita* view and support the *Ajāti* or the absolute non-evolution (of what exists)' (ibid.). That is the non-causal philosophy of Advaita. The people belonging to different schools of thought, the *Naiyayikas*, *Samkhyas*, were spread throughout India. During Acharya Shankara's time they were existing. Eastern philosophies were so many, which belonged to this category of dualism. Most of the Christian, Islam sects are all dualistic as religion. Therefore they quarrel with each other. Dualists have to quarrel. 'I am right, you are wrong.' Absolutely essential!

'Both theories are based upon causality. ... We approve the *Ajāti* or non-creation declared by them. We do not quarrel with them. Now, hear from us (the Ultimate Reality) which is free from all disputations. ... Both schools by finding fault with each other's views regarding 'causal' relation tend to establish the truth of *Ajāti* or the absolute non-manifestation of *Ātman*. That is non-causality' (218-9). So we accept it.

'The disputants (i.e., the dualists) contend that the ever-unborn (changeless) entity (*Ātman*) undergoes a change. How does an entity which is changeless and immortal partake of the nature of the mortal?' (219). All the dualists are mentioned. 'The immortal cannot become mortal, nor can the mortal ever become immortal. For, it is never possible for a thing to change its nature' (220). What is its nature cannot be changed. 'How can he, who believes that the naturally immortal entity becomes mortal, maintain that the immortal, after passing through birth, retains its changeless nature?' (ibid.). Once you accept the change how can it remain changeless? The milk has become curd, yoghurt. Then can you say that the milk is still

milk? No, not at all. It has become curd. What is the nature of a thing? What do we mean by that? The next *shloka* says that.

'By *Prakṛti* or the inherent nature of a thing is understood that which, when acquired, becomes completely part and parcel of the thing, that which is its very characteristic quality, that which is part of it from its very birth, that which does not depend upon anything extraneous for its origin and that which never ceases to be itself' (221). All this is understood by the nature of it.

Suppose I say the nature of a metal is to be like this. But, in science you can transmute anything into something else. Then you will say that it is not its real nature. Its real nature is the electrons and protons and nothing else. That is the real nature of a thing. And that can never be changed. All the four qualities are given here. The nature of a thing is discussed. What a clear thinking is there like scientific precision. What you say, you say with clarity: one, two, three, four.

Even the nature of a thing in ordinary experience does not undergo any reversal. What is meant by the nature of a thing? This is thus replied: The word 'samsiddhi' means 'complete attainment'. The nature of a thing is formed by such complete attainment as in the case of the perfected *Yogis* who attain to such superhuman powers as *Aṇimā* [contraction, expansion] etc. These powers thus acquired by the *Yogis* never undergo any transformation in the past and future. Therefore these constitute the very nature of the *Yogis*. Similarly, the characteristic quality of a thing, such as heat or light of fire and the like, never undergoes any change either in time or space. So also the nature of a thing which is part of it from its very birth, as the flying power of the bird etc., through the sky, is called its *Prakṛti* [or nature]. Anything else which is not produced by any other cause (except the thing itself), such as the running downwards of water is also called *Prakṛti* (ibid.).

That is nature. Water runs downwards, never can it run upwards, unless you cause it to do so. That means you have intervened. That is no more its nature. There is one road in Teheran where you keep your car stationary, engine shut off, and you feel it is climbing up the road. There is a road there, many visitors go there. A car is climbing up when you leave it and shut off the engine. I went and experienced it. The road is up and your car is going up. It is an illusion. Everybody goes and sees that. Very interesting.⁹⁹

In the case of a yogi the power was there without manifesting. After attaining of spiritual knowledge, it is manifested. The power was there. Just like a baby has the power of begetting children in a future age. Now it is not there, but it is there; it is part of it. 'And lastly, anything which does not cease to be itself is known popularly to be its *Prakṛti*' (ibid.). A thing does not cease to be itself, that is its *prakṛti*, its nature. A thing cannot give up its nature. If you find it has given up its nature, it is accidental, temporary. Like water being hot, hot water is not cold. Being cold is water's nature. Or water going upward. Why? There is a pump, so the water is going up, because there is a pump. It is unnatural, not natural.

The purport of the *Kārikā* is that if in the case of empirical entities, which are only imagined, their *nature* or *Prakṛti* does not undergo any change, then how should it be otherwise in the case of immortal or unchanging nature regarding the Ultimate Reality, whose very *Prakṛti* is *Ajāti* or absolute non-manifestation. ... All the *Jīvas* are, by their very nature, free from senility and death. [Senility means old age.] They think, as it were, that they are subject to these and thus by this very thought they appear to deviate from their very nature (221-2).

I am the Atman. That is my nature. But I feel fear; I feel attraction, that is why I am a *jīva*. By this you think you are deviated but you have not.

Your real nature remains the same. This is like the water getting hot. Something else has been added. 'They (appear to) fall from their real nature by this defect in their thought' (222). Appear to fall, man has not really fallen; he seems to have fallen.

'There are six changes associated with objects in nature. They are birth, [coming into] existence, growth, maturity, decay and death. ... The disputant, according to whom the cause itself is the effect, [that is the *Samkhyas*] maintains that the cause itself is born as the effect. How is it possible for the cause to be unborn if it be said to be born (as the effect)? How, again, is it said to be eternal if it be subject to modification (*i.e.*, birth)?' (223). These are all discussions about causality as held by various schools, ancient or even modern.

So, the *Samkhyas* say that the cause is non-different from the effect. Then, the effect also must be unborn. If the cause is non-different from the effect, cause is unborn, effect is also unborn. Modern logic says: what is cause in modern logic? A cause, which is itself an effect, without any further reference to an ultimate cause. The cause, which was itself an effect. A father, who was himself the son of somebody—like this, it goes on indefinitely. You have to always go back!

'There is no illustration to support the view of him who says that the effect is born from the unborn cause. Again, if it be said that the effect is produced from the cause which is itself born then it leads to a *regressus ad infinitum*' (*ibid.*). You land yourself in that position, if you hold that view. Like it is said, God is without father, God himself is the Father. Because, if you go on raising things, and God himself may not be the first to be born. Then, it would be that he has a father, like that. It would be impertinent. But, logic requires cause. If you should believe

in cause, it goes on endlessly. Very interesting. There are some who maintain that the effect is the cause of the cause. The cause is the cause of the effect. We describe as a matter of fact, evolution, a man has a birth, father from the son. How can father be born from the son? Go backward. These are all discussions on this subject of causality. This leads to the finding that causality does not exist, it is an imagined thing. That is what also a scientist will conclude in dealing with sub-atomic particles. All are unborn, indeterminate. That is the language used.

(*To be continued*)

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97. The reference is to these lines of poetry: 'There lives more faith in honest doubt / Believe me, than in half the creeds.' (Lord Alfred Tennyson, *In Memoriam A H H*, 96).
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Vedanta Answers

Swami Smaranananda

(Continued from the previous issue)

[Srimat Swami Smarananandaji Maharaj, Vice-President, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, has been asked various questions regarding various aspects of spiritual life by the young and old alike, over a period of time. This is a collection of such questions and his answers to them—Editor.]

QUESTION: When everything is within, and not without, then what is the process to go inside? What experience, sensation does one feel when one sees this knowledge that is within?

Answer: We function through our mind. When we say ‘inside’, we refer to the mind. The so called ‘outside’ is the body-mind complex external to the mind. You can’t get rid of it. Can you imagine a TV or computer without the outer shell, the box, and the screen? When you look within—that is when the mind concentrates on itself—the external ceases to exist as it were. One of the Upanishads says: ‘Our mind is the cause of bondage as well as freedom. A mind allotted to external things leads to bondage and a mind attached to nothing external is free.’⁵

Question: Could you please tell in detail how to know the Self? In this context, what is meant by ‘not being emotionally attached’ or ‘not being selfish’?

Answer: Our mind has to be trained to concentrate on itself through meditation, japa, devotional songs, and the like. One way is to question your mind, ‘Who am I?’ Any kind of concentration slowly removes unnecessary modifications of the mind, *vrittis*. We go from many *vrittis* to

one single *vritti*. Finally that too is wiped out. Then the Atman alone abides.

Question: It is said that we should always concentrate on the ‘Self’ and at the same time, we should not be selfish. In order to be not selfish, we should think about others also.

Answer: Our mind is attached to many things, it gets identified to various objects. By turning the mind inwards, one can get rid of unnecessary *vrittis*.

Question: Is the ‘peace’ experience during meditation also a kind of ‘pleasure’ and can it turn out to be a foe? Or is it always a friend?

Answer: ‘Peace’ can sometimes be deceptive. That can be pleasant due to tranquillity. It may be an obstacle, but not a foe. We have to go beyond that experience.

Question: Swamiji, if our physical body is unhealthy, then it has its influence on the mind, that is, the mind will not be calm. In that case how do we recoup this condition and get the control of the mind?

Answer: Well, if there is a disease, we will have to get it cured. Or else you will have to detach the mind from the body or at least the disease. But this is not very easy.

Question: Many of us find it difficult to stick to a regular schedule. Many times, the nature of our work is also the cause. What is the way out? Please suggest some practical tips.

Answer: To order your life with a regular schedule is essential for success in any walk of life. It is true that the modern way of life does

not allow you to do it. Well, in that case try to do the best under the circumstances. You will have to work it out yourself, as circumstances are different for different people.

Question: What is the importance of good company in befriending our mind?

Answer: Your company reveals your character. Trees buried in the earth under thousands of feet become fossils, almost stone. Similarly, if you are in good company, you imbibe good habits, which again help you to form good character.

Question: I have felt that bad thoughts are more powerful than good thoughts. Why is it so? Their effect on the mind is more subtle, unconscious, whereas good thoughts are conscious. Why is this so?

Answer: Bad thoughts are embedded in the mind since many lifetimes. To wash them out, much effort is necessary. If bad thoughts are to be driven out, good thoughts are to be brought in consciously. It is a long process. It takes years to free the mind from bad tendencies collected over many lifetimes. But, don't lose heart. By continuous efforts you can succeed. 'Rome was not built in a day' as the saying goes.

Question: Should we accept *Smriti*?

Answer: What do you mean by that? There are many *Smritis*. Follow the universal ideas found in the Bhagavadgita and the Upanishads.

Question: Where did we come from? What is our relationship with God?

Answer: God is not sitting somewhere above the clouds. He is in your heart, he is everywhere. Know yourself, then you can know God. This question can't be answered in a few lines. Read philosophy and the basic scriptures.

Question: In our day-to-day life, when everything is normal, the mind seems to be controlled. But most of the times, wrongdoings or outbursts of anger are invoked by some impulses. How to treat ourselves in the moment of that kind of impulse that may have been caused due to external circumstances?

Answer: You will have to bring your mind under control by discrimination or *viveka*. Self-analysis is important. If you get angry, ask yourself why you have got angry. Try to bring your mind to higher levels of consciousness.

Question: We sleep for five to seven hours in the night but we sleep in the day also. Sometimes our mood is sleepy and lazy, and we have no concentration in work. How to get rid of this and how to be active all the time?

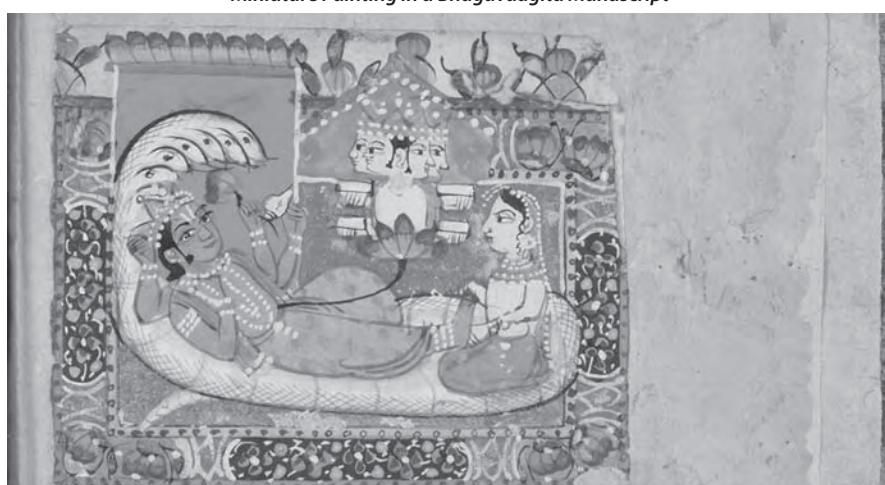
Answer: Find out why you need so much sleep. As a young person, so much sleep is unnecessary. You will have to strengthen your mind and bring it under control. You must do regular physical exercises including asanas.



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Minature Painting in a Bhagavadgita Manuscript



Saga of Epic Proportions

Swami Sandarshananda

(Continued from the previous issue)

A Real Lioness

SISTER NIVEDITA FIRST CAME in contact with Swami Vivekananda in November 1895. Its impact on her was tremendous, about which she has expressly said in her book *The Master as I Saw Him*. In a short while after her first acquaintance Swamiji, however, left London, to return next year when she became close and had ample opportunity to talk. She impressed Swamiji distinctively by her maturity, sincerity, learning, and above all, by her purity and unselfishness. Nivedita was now twenty-eight years old, and a well-known educationist as well as a journalist in London. She was also one of the founders of the famous Sesame Club, where she had regular interactions with intellectual stalwarts such as G B Shaw, T H Huxley, Yeats, and other reputed thinkers. But, it was Swamiji's intellectual acumen and spiritual depth that influenced her most. Seeing in her a right kind of person he was looking for, Swamiji wrote to her an inspiring letter on 7 June 1896. He said in it:

Religions of the world have become lifeless mockeries. What the world wants is character. The world is in need of those whose life is one burning love, selfless. That love will make every word tell like thunderbolt.

It is no superstition with you, I am sure, you have the making in you of a world-mover, and others will also come. Bold words and bolder deeds are what we want. Awake, awake, great ones! The world is burning with misery. Can you sleep? Let us call and call till the sleeping gods awake, till the god within answers to the

call. What more is in life? What greater work? The details come to me as I go. I never make plans. Plans grow and work themselves. I only say, awake, awake!¹⁵

It is imaginable how the above words energised Nivedita to be able to determine the future course of her life in line with Swamiji's action plan, for she had meanwhile accepted him as her master. As she had finally decided to come to India, Swamiji was obviously happy and welcomed her with a note of caution. Swamiji wrote on 29 July 1897:

Let me tell you frankly that I am now convinced that you have a great future in the work for India. What was wanted was not a man, but a woman—a real lioness—to work for the Indians, women specially.

India cannot yet produce great women, she must borrow them from other nations. Your education, sincerity, purity, immense love, determination, and above all, the Celtic blood make you just the woman wanted.

Yet the difficulties are many. You cannot form any idea of misery, the superstition, and the slavery that are here. You will be in the midst of a mass of half-naked men and women with quaint ideas of caste and isolation, shunning the white skin through fear or hatred and hated by them intensely. On the other hand, you will be looked upon by the white as a crank, and every one of your movements will be watched with suspicion.

Then the climate is fearfully hot; our winter in most places being like your summer, and in the south it is always blazing.

Not one European comfort is to be had in places out of the cities. If in spite of all this, you dare venture into the work, you are welcome, a hundred times welcome. As for me, I am nobody here as elsewhere, but what little influence I have shall be devoted to your service.

You must think well before you plunge in; and after work, if you fail in this or get disgusted, on my part I promise you, I will stand by you unto death whether you work for India or not, whether you give up Vedanta or remain in it. 'The tusks of the elephant come out, but never go back'; so are the words of a man never retracted. I promise you that. Again, I must give you a bit of warning. You must stand on your own feet. (7.511-2).

Swamiji made his ideal clear to her in his earlier letter of 7 June 1896 so that there shouldn't remain any confusion about it in her mind. He conveyed to her the idea that his task in essence was of spiritual growth of mankind. He wrote: 'My ideal indeed can be put into a few words and that is: to preach unto mankind their divinity, and how to make it manifest in every movement of life' (7.501). Swamiji was quite particular to let her know his mind, giving the message of his expectation before she embarked on her voyage to India. On 1 October 1897 he wrote: 'Some people do the best work when led. Not every one is born to lead. The best leader, however, is one who "leads like the baby". The baby, though apparently depending on everyone, is the king of the household. At least, to my thinking, that is the secret' (8.428). By this he significantly indicated that should Nivedita lead his work, she must know first and learn what leadership really means. Continuing, he gave the secret of success thus: 'Many feel, but only a few can express. It is the power of expressing one's love and appreciation and sympathy for others, that enables one person to succeed better in spreading the idea than others' (8.428-9).

He carried on and explained the complexity he generally faced in his dealings with people and the remedy he could offer to certain typical problems developed centering his own personality. This he did with the purpose of giving her a piece of lesson in the light of his experience. He wrote in the letter again:

The great difficulty is this: I see persons giving me almost the whole of their love. But I must not give anyone the whole of mine in return, for that day the work would be ruined. Yet there are some who will look for such a return, not having the breadth of the impersonal view. It is absolutely necessary to the work that I should have the enthusiastic love of as many as possible, while I myself remain entirely impersonal. Otherwise jealousy and quarrels would break up everything. A leader must be impersonal. I am sure you understand this. I do not mean that one should be a brute, making use of the devotion of others for his own ends, and laughing in his sleeve meanwhile. What I mean is what I am, intensely personal in my love, but having the power to pluck out my own heart with my own hand, if it becomes necessary, 'for the good of many, for the welfare of many', as Buddha said. Madness of love, and yet in it no bondage. Matter changed into spirit by the force of love. Nay, that is the gist of our Vedanta. There is but One, seen by the ignorant as matter, by the wise as God. And the history of civilisation is the progressive reading of spirit into matter. The ignorant see the person in the non-person. The sage sees the non-person in the person. Through pain and pleasure, joy and sorrow, this is the one lesson we are learning. (8.429).

The content of this letter was rich, and it would have been hard for an ordinary person to digest. To Swamiji's estimation Nivedita was extraordinary. Therefore, there was spontaneity in it which Swamiji deliberately demonstrated, considering Nivedita competent to be able to absorb its implicit elevated ideas, and also to use

its wisdom for her work in India in the near future. That's how Swamiji did the groundwork and sowed the best seed in her mind prior to her coming to India. Like an expert gardener he then held his patience to see the outcome. The seed must take its time to disintegrate, decay, and rot, in order to germinate, sprout, and grow healthy under the vigilant care of its good gardener.

Which is why, Swamiji said that he had given the maximum time for Nivedita's development. Born in a country diametrically opposite in culture and civilisation, she was to be exorcised of all her preconceived parochial ideas. Her intrepid self was initially rigid, revolting, and resitive. To tame her, Swamiji had to deal out shocks, albeit in proportionate measures. They eventually did her good. Nivedita, as a result, grew into a gigantic tree and offered the best fruits to India and her people, shorn of the misconception. But there is no denying that her struggle to become so was, nevertheless, replete with exceptional challenges and difficulties.

Nivedita started the work even while in England, organising a Vedanta Movement with other followers of Swamiji after his departure from there. The newly founded Ramakrishna Mission in India meanwhile began a relief work for the famine affected. She raised money for it. She left England to reach Calcutta on 28 January 1898. Swamiji himself had received her at the docks. But he was all the while under a great tension whether Holy Mother Sarada Devi would accept her. He had made the Holy Mother, the spiritual head of the Ramakrishna Mission some time ago. He thought that if the Holy Mother didn't approve, Nivedita couldn't join the Order. In the meantime, on 8 February 1898, Mrs Ole Bull and Miss Josephine Macleod arrived from America. On 11 March Nivedita delivered her first lecture in the Star Theatre of Calcutta, the topic of the lecture being 'Influence of the Spiritual

Thoughts of India in England'. On 17 March, Swamiji arranged the first visit of all the three foreign ladies to the Holy Mother and waited with bated breath for its consequence.

When he heard that the Holy Mother had received them with open arms and ate with them with no hesitation at all, which in those days was unimaginable for any brahmana lady growing amidst stringent caste norms and social disciplines, he was ecstatic with joy. Nivedita described the day in her diary as 'a day of days'. Swamiji had no doubt from then on that the Holy Mother would always stay beside Nivedita and support her work for women education in India. Nivedita could very well understand the far reaching impact of this incident. She wrote on 22 May to her friend Mrs Eric Hammond: 'And she [Sarada Devi] is so tender—"my daughter" she calls me. She has always been terribly orthodox, but all this melted away the instant she saw the first two Westerns—Mrs Bull and Miss Macleod, and she tasted food with them! ... This gave us all a dignity and made my future work possible in a way nothing else could possibly have done.'¹⁶

Swamiji initiated her spiritually as a novice of the Ramakrishna Order and gave her the name 'Nivedita' on 25 March. Starting with Swamiji and other two American ladies on 11 May, she went on a travel to the Himalayas. During this trip Swamiji had to handle her aggressively for the many conflicts she was experiencing in her ideas. The worst one was, perhaps, when she expected that Swamiji would give her spiritual enlightenment by a simple touch, as Swamiji himself had it from his master Sri Ramakrishna. Her desire for it soared witnessing Swamiji in a high spiritual condition looking like God at Amarnath. She gave its account to her friend Mrs Eric Hammond on 7 August 1898.

And now I must tell you something that will startle you—I have been away up in the Himalayas

for a week—18,000 feet high—I went with Swami to see the glaciers—so much anyone may know. The rest you may *not* tell. It was a pilgrimage really to the Caves of Amarnath, where he was anxious to dedicate me to Siva.

For him it was a wonderfully solemn moment. He was utterly absorbed though he was only there for two minutes, and then he fled lest emotion should get the upper hand. He was utterly exhausted too—for we had had a long and dangerous climb on foot—and his heart is weak. But I wish you could see his faith and courage and joy ever since. He says Siva gave him Amar (immortality) and now he cannot die till he himself wishes it. I am so so glad to have been there with him. That must be a memory for ever, mustn't it?—and he *did* dedicate me to Siva too—though it's not the Hindu way to let one share in the dedication—and since he told me so I have grown Hindu in taste with alarming rapidity.

I am so deeply and intensely glad of this revelation that he has had. But oh Nell dear—it is such terrible pain to come face to face with something which is all *inwardness* to some one you worship, and for yourself to be able to get little further than externals. Swami could have made it live—but he was lost.

Even now I can scarcely look back on those hours without dropping once more into their abyss of anguish and disappointment, but I know that I am wrong—for I see that I am utterly forgiven by the King [Swamiji] and that in some strange way I am nearer to him and to GOD for the pilgrimage. But oh for the bitterness of a lost chance—that can never never come again. For I was angry with him and would not listen to him when he was going to talk.

I have a feeling dear Nell that you will have some strong quiet piece of comfort in your brave heart—but if only I had not been a discordant note in it all for him! If I had made myself *part* of it, by a little patience and sympathy! And that can never be undone. The only comfort is that it was my own loss—but *such* a loss!

You see I told him that if he would not put more reality into the word Master he would have to remember that we were nothing more to each other than an ordinary man and woman, and so I snubbed him and shut myself up in a hard shell.

He was so exquisite about it. Not a bit angry—only caring for little comforts for me. I suppose he thought I was tired—only he *couldn't* tell me about himself any more! And the next morning as we came home he said 'Margot, I haven't the power to do these things for you—I am not Ramakrishna Paramahansa.' The most perfect because the most unconscious humility you ever saw.

But you know part of it is the inevitable suffering that comes of the different national habits. My Irish nature expresses everything, the Hindu never dreams of expression, and Swami is so utterly shy of priestliness, whereas I am always craving for it—and so on. Now that's enough selfishness—only remember I shall tell plenty of people I have been up there—but I shall tell no one what I've told you and you're not to be betrayed into any knowledge of the pilgrimage as anything but a sight (1.17-9).

The candid recounting of an incident of that magnitude tells about Nivedita's guileless character and spiritual urgency that Swamiji justifies with his unhindered affection by means of the demonstration of the palpable reality, which Nivedita could see at last as true and undeniable. Temporarily, she indeed got disturbed finding it didn't happen actually. Her misunderstanding with Swamiji then multiplied also on various other issues. It was a stormy period of her life. Thus an entry in her diary at this time says:

In spite of such general interests, however, the inner strife grew high, and the thought pressed on the mind of one of the older members [Miss Macleod] of our party that the Master himself needed service and peace. Many times he spoke with wonder of the torture of life, and who can

say how many signs there were, of bitter need? A word or two was spoken—little, but enough—and he, after many hours, came back and told us that he longed for quiet, and would go alone to the forests and find soothing.

And then, looking up, he saw the young moon shining above us, and he said 'The Mohammedans think much of the new moon. Let us also, with the new moon, begin a new life!' And he blessed his daughter with a great blessing, so that she, thinking that her old relationship was broken, nor dreaming that a new and deeper life was being given to it, knew only that the hour was strange and passing sweet.

And so that strife was ended, and for all views and opinions of the Swami, there was room made thenceforth, that they might be held and examined, and determined on at leisure, however impossible and unpleasing they might seem at the first.¹⁷

In any case, the clouds of frustration cleared off her mind before long. She at last realised her own limitations and took its entire burden upon herself, being able to renew her love for her master through rigorous introspection and self-analysis. She too had like him in the early years a severely tense moment dealing with her inclinations of serving mankind vis-à-vis her deep spiritual yearnings. She revealed the sum and substance of her self-analysis to Mrs Bull on 13 August 1900.

LIFE is *Hell* in its very nature, as Buddha said. I can't think why one did not see it years ago. Why did that golden shimmer of Hope transfuse everything when one was young? Did one not *know*—long long ago—that it should come upon one as *surprise* now? For it is not self-suffering that makes it so terrible. I have none. It is this awful fact that wherever one steps one crushes a human life. The sweet-shop, making slaves of some men that others may enjoy one of the accessories is a true picture. We cannot seek for GOD without having some human thirst somewhere unquenched. Nothing like joy comes

to anyone of us but it turns to suffering. 'Humanity is crucified for ever on a cross of gold.'

The millionaire, hypnotised by his gold, watches it, and to his horror at the last he beholds it as a mass of horrible corruption. Will the terrible nightmare ever break? Space becomes shriveled up. One place is like another. But when will *Time* be at an end?

And then, this is all talk. Deep deep deep in us, through and through one's being, twine the roots of Desire. Is Death like Life? I used to think *I* thought it was! I thought it was quite easy! But it is not. Pain and pleasure, even, are not the same. The degree that one can endure is so small.

It is not the breaking of ONE dream, but thousands. Curtain after curtain is drawn back, but scene after scene is disclosed. Oh the thirst for power remains to the farthest horizon that one can see! How can one ever reach the truth?

The vanity, the meddlesomeness, the self-assertion, the pride and contempt and impatience

Ice Linga of Amarnath



for others that are never dead! They are less mean perhaps than the love of comfort but they are 20000 times more impossible to slay.

Why do I think all this? I don't know. But I must talk it out.

We seem to be in a thorn-grown twilight—all of us—and there is NO getting out. The most futile will o' the wisps in the whole wilderness those dreams of helping others, that lead us further into the morass of Hope. Because in Hell *how can there be joy?* And if no joy, then certainly no Help. One does not desire to receive (at least in one's hypocrisy one believes one does not!) but the dream of *giving* dies hard. Well, there is no giving then. But at least one can *Suffer!* How futile is the expedient! It is to *know* that one so longs. There *is* something big. We are conscious of our love even in our powerlessness and despair. We require to be conscious of That which is behind *all* such limitation. (Probably) It is. Certainly we do not know it. Nor do I see any hope of reaching for oneself unless Swami will give it by a miracle. That is what I have come to now. A mere universe and him—a

sullen tolerance of things. Will he give it? Will he give it? Alas—dear Saint Sara, but I tell you in a whisper—he cannot. For I have seen him try, before. He would have done it already if he could. He has it—and the power to give—but something depends on oneself—that is not there—of course it is not. Has one desired so greatly as to lose anything by it? Has one sacrificed mind or comfort (I mean *real* comfort—apparent comfort is a different thing—but be the bed soft or be it hard, *sleep* is really all that matters) or affection for the desire? And what did they sacrifice?—Rama-Krishna and he? What did they not sacrifice rather?

He told me himself that the desire for realisation came upon him 'like a fever' and wherever he was he would struggle for it—sitting in one place 24 hours at a stretch without moving. When has one even *desired* like this?

How easy it is to say—but I don't *want* Salvation in any form—I prefer to help, to be a sacrifice. When there *is* no help—and there needs no sacrifice—one might as well try for Salvation!

Swami Vivekananda along with Mrs Bull, Miss Macleod, and Sister Nivedita in Kashmir



Don't say anything about this letter. I don't see why I send it at all.

You are just as much my Granny as anyone ever was. These things are all real as well as all unreal—are they not?¹⁸

The roots of father-daughter relationship between Swamiji and Nivedita were striking deeper and deeper then onwards. She considered herself an intimate member of the family that grew on Swamiji. Because of that relationship, she could establish herself among the Hale sisters to whom Swamiji was a beloved brother. Besides, her feeling of a daughter was getting keener now. She returned to the West at Swamiji's behest to work out his plan of serving India. She was to lecture from place to place on the Indian ideals. Once she had started it she thought it necessary to tell everything to him as a dear child would do to her father. Alongside this, being away from him, she remained too worried like a grown-up daughter for her ailing old father, as he was so sick. She tried to coax his sinking enthusiasm with sweet and good words as a responsible daughter who saw her father unconsciously shrinking his famously vigorous form. He appeared to her like a child who needed special care. It pained her most and gave her serious cause for suspecting his survival. A few months later on 15 December 1899 she wrote a letter to him which reflected all that comprehensibly.

My dear father,

All day I have been promising myself the joy of writing to you. I was too tired the other night to put in an extra word.

Aunt Mary took me up by the roots yesterday and transplanted me here, into luxury's lap for a few days, and I hadn't been here very long before I realised how very solemn I had been for some weeks, and how good it was to laugh. Miss Harriet Mckindley was at home you see!

Then Aunt Mary stayed to dinner and spent

the evening, which was lovely. It is her birthday today.

Monday evening

Haven't I been a bad daughter? To my old father, too! But I hear that he isn't poor and old any longer. That he is growing quite young and frisky, in fact! Dear dear, so we go reversing on every hand some ancient adage. Evidently it is now to be when the *mice* are away, that the *cat* will play!

Oh Swami, Swami, Swami! If only it is true—if only Mother *will* give you back your health—so that you can really know once more what it is to be a strong man—able for the burden that he's willing for—there will be nothing left to ask in life. Only She mustn't drop you back into the old abyss! But I have great hopes that She won't!

I am to stay here now till Saturday next, on which day the family-party is to be broken up anyway, and I can go back to my own abode. This has been such a lovely time for me—the more so because of its opportunity for getting to know the others as well as Mary. I think perhaps Isabel is the most sympathetic of the other three to me now—a result which I little expected.

Some ladies came to see me one day, to ask about the Conventional idea. One of them said: 'I have never wanted to be a Catholic—yet I have longed all my life to go into a convent! But I never thought of expressing it. I drifted into marriage and now I am a widow with 2 children, and something you said about child-widows the other night explained the whole thing and my own dissatisfaction to me!' And the other who was still unmarried said 'Oh I want to know about Renunciation! Tell me some more!' I told them both how I didn't 'believe' anything at all before I met you—and how I only heard one word that you said—Renunciation—and how to this day I seemed to have gone on hearing nothing else. I felt that the moment we foresaw had come to me—some of the souls who were waiting for *this* word had

answered to the signal. Dear little Mrs. Yarros makes such a fuss about it, of objection, which is making me go deep down into the rationality of it. I love her—and your beautiful letter is the abiding crown upon the word.

Your daughter

Margot (1.265-6).

This letter makes clean breast of the fact that their intimacy as master and disciple was founded on a firm ground which was never to be shaken by any incidental happenings, however threatening they might have seemed on the surface. In spite of her fear, she could never believe that Swamiji would die so quickly. Many a time she heard him mentioning that he was preparing for his death that was approaching fast. Even then she thought a few years more would be at her disposal to have his company as her guardian. So, contrarily, when she found him left for his heavenly abode defying her earnest expectations, it was too hard a blow for her to absorb. She could never come to terms with his sudden departure. Her daughter-heart was weeping incessantly even to her last. Of the many letters she wrote pathetically narrating Swamiji's passing, the one to Mr and Mrs Eric Hammond on 28 August 1902 was extremely touching. She wrote:

Swamiji had been, as you have doubtless heard, very ill all winter. When we saw him here, after his return from Benares, I was shocked. Still one never thought that he would die. There was so much for him to do. In that first meeting, he said he was going away, but we thought it would be to Japan, because a great man's tendency was to prepare his workers and then crush them by looking after them. Afterwards he went for a very severe cure, in which for the three hottest months, he was allowed to drink no water, and made to live only on milk. He became radiant looking, just as he used to be in London. All these months he was very insistent on getting the men up at 3-30 or 4—for their

plunge in the Ganges and meditation in the Chapel before dawn. But his nerves were utterly worn, and the improvement was mainly of the body. That and the wonderful divine light, which somehow never ceased to grow brighter and brighter whatever might be the state of mind or nerves. The change began about ten days before the end. I came back eight days before, and he told me 'I feel that I am drawing nearer to death, and a great austerity and meditation are coming upon me. I spend hours every day in the Chapel.'

As he spoke, a gecko—a sort of lizard—cried. People here have superstition—that whatever the gecko answers comes true, but I was so sure Swami had three or four years more at least, that I never dreamt of it. This was Sunday—and on Friday night he left us.

On Wednesday I went again, and stayed from 9 till noon. Oh! He was so sweet! I think now that he knew I would never see him again. Such blessings! Such sweetness! I cannot tell you. If I had only known! As it was, well as he looked, I was so full of the idea of the care he required that I introduced no topic lest it might agitate him, and I dreaded overstaying, lest I should make him tired. If I had only known how precious every moment would have been, but oh—how unbearable!

He insisted on serving me (but this is not for repetition to others), fanning me while I ate, washing my hands for me, and so on. I said—'Swami, I hate you to do this. I should do it for you.' Then he laughed and said in his daring way—'But Jesus washed the feet of His disciples.' It was on the tip of my tongue to say—'But then, that was the last time.' Thank Heaven, I did not.

And so I came away. On Friday, he sent word to Calcutta that he had never felt better. He was in the Chapel till noon. Then he gave a Sanskrit lesson to the boys for three hours, and talked to many people with SUCH sweetness all the afternoon. At half-past four, his message

reached Calcutta, he drank a cup of hot milk and water and set out on a two miles walk—coming home, he sent everyone away, that he might meditate alone—the evening meditation at sunset. And strange to say—quite contrary to our usual custom, he sat through that meditation facing the North-West. After an hour or so, he turned round and lay down, calling a boy to massage and fan him. Then he slept quietly.

Suddenly there was a trembling—a crying as if in sleep, a heavy breath, then a long pause—another breath, and that was all. Our beloved Master was gone from us for ever. Life's even-song was over, Earth's silence and Freedom's dawn was come.

Who is to speak with the sweetness with which he lingered over us, blessing us, all those last days?

Be sure, you dears, were not forgotten, as the great heart told over its own—and Oh—I have had so many a token since he went, that even yet we are not forgotten—that whatever else the Eternal Samadhi be, it includes forever that mighty will of him to redeem and save!

And yet, I could wish that he were utterly forgotten that he might be lost in Existence-Knowledge-Bliss, and free of even the memory of the torture of life.

How I *long* to serve him—in some essential way—regardless of what comes of it. Glad if it be some terrible links that waits to be forged. Pray that I may have strength and faithfulness and knowledge, to do this and ask no other blessing for me. I want no other. He is NOT dead—dear Nell. He is with us always. I cannot even grieve. I only want to work (1.498–500).

Mrs Eric Hammond knew Swamiji very well. She attended Swamiji's lectures in London and was too impressed by his wisdom, life, and teachings. She offered a glowing tribute to Swamiji after his demise which has been included in *Reminiscences of Swami Vivekananda*.¹⁹ Nivedita shared her feelings in that manner not only

because Mrs Hammond was her bosom friend but also because she knew how deeply Hammond used to love and respect Swamiji. As she had told her, she was definite that Swamiji would live a little longer, notwithstanding the many premonitions she was encountering in close successions. She was never willing to believe that she would be deserted by her master suddenly so soon, who was to her a protective father on whom she naturally doted as well. Swamiji's brother-disciple Swami Brahmananda, a highly developed spiritual soul knew that Swamiji was to die anytime. He said the reason was because he perceived Sri Ramakrishna in him which was a clear indication to him of Swamiji's departure shortly. Of all these, Nivedita herself had a peculiar dream on that very night. She saw in it that Sri Ramakrishna was leaving his body for the second time. The dream broke her sleep, and she woke up only to receive the shocking news from the Belur Math of her master's passing away. Swami Brahmananda's perception and Nivedita's dream vindicated Sri Ramakrishna's saying that he and Swami Vivekananda were essentially one and non-different. And Nivedita's dream experience was, otherwise, a sort of intimation to her prior to the message arriving early in the morning through a messenger.

(To be continued)

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18. *Letters of Sister Nivedita*, 1.379–80.
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BALABODHA

Ancient Wisdom Made Easy

Dharma

WE WILL TRY TO UNDERSTAND the meaning of the word 'dharma'. Originally, this is a Sanskrit word. Sanskrit is a classical language like Greek, Latin, and Persian. And in Sanskrit, as in most classical languages, most words are derived from a stem or root.

The word 'dharma' is derived from the root *dhri*, which means to hold, to keep, or to maintain. So, that which holds, keeps, or maintains is dharma. Dharma maintains, keeps, or holds the very basis of this universe, the cosmic order. In that sense, dharma means the proper functioning of the various cyclical activities of this universe that maintain its balance.

Dharma also means righteousness since it enables one to be closer to truth, which maintains the cosmic order, also called *rita*. So, for an individual, *sva-dharma*, one's own dharma, would mean that which one has to do because of one's committing to it or because of one's station in life.

Dharma can also mean the faith traditions of people because these traditions have been conceived and strengthened by the meditations and realisations of rishis. These traditions are eternal and that is why the name Sanatana Dharma. Dharma should not be confused with the English word 'religion'. Religion generally means a group bound by its belief systems.

The word 'dharma' cannot be translated into any single word in English, and has multiple meanings. Another meaning is property, attribute, or nature. So, if one says that fluidity is the dharma of water, it means that fluidity is the property of water. Dharma could also mean

the intrinsic nature of a thing or person. For instance, it is the dharma of fire to burn.

Another meaning of dharma is social code or law. Since these laws are considered to be the basis of social fabric, they are called dharma. Several such social codes exist like the *Manu Smriti* and *Yajnavalkya Smriti*. Dharma can also mean any rule, decree, ordinance, or statute. The decree of the government or the king could be called *raja-dharma*.

In Buddhism, dharma has the additional meaning of the teachings of Gautama Buddha. Some traditions also use the word to mean the commentaries or interpretations of Buddha's teachings. The word 'dharma' also means virtue as found in many texts. Jainism uses the word 'dharma' to represent the teachings of the Jain prophets. In Jain philosophy, the word 'dharma' has a special meaning of the principle of motion, which is a sub-category of the non-soul, *ajiva*.

The concept of dharma in the sense of a cosmic harmony has been denoted in various symbols like the famous Dharma Chakra or the wheel of dharma, which finds place in the Ashoka Chakra depicted in the Indian national flag and also in the Indian national emblem.

In essence, dharma is something that has to be practised according to the Indian tradition. The Upanishads exhort one to practise dharma and speak the truth. And in this sense, which has to be considered as the main meaning of the word, dharma means maintaining harmony through the practice of righteousness and many other similar virtues.

TRADITIONAL TALES

The Goddess's Blessings

AN ASCETIC LIVED ON A CLIFF and spent his time doing severe austerities. He considered the sky as his roof and the grass as his bed. Once while he was meditating, he felt a strange feeling in his heart. Unable to understand the cause of such feeling, he opened his eyes. He saw in front of him Goddess Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth. He immediately prostrated at her feet.

The goddess said: 'Dear child! A seed gives its due result. Similarly, it is the cosmic rule that one who does good deeds attains to good and one who does evil deeds attains to evil. You have done many good deeds in your previous lifetimes. And that is why I will stay with you for some time. No danger will befall you till my grace is upon you. The king and the common people would praise you and revere you. I have come only to bestow my grace upon you.'

The ascetic smiled upon hearing these words of the goddess. He saluted her with folded hands and humbly said: 'Mother! The praise, insult, or indifference of the king or the common people—is all the same to me. Royal honour might be a great thing for the worldly. But, in truth, it is petty. There is nothing equal to God.'

'Mother! To me, detachment and meditating on God alone are true wealth. These unparalleled forms of wealth give me great happiness. What use does a mendicant like me have for other forms of wealth? Many householders are yearning for your, the goddess of wealth's, grace. If you bestow your grace upon them, they would be greatly benefited. I don't need your wealth just as a blind person has no use for a beautiful painting. You know well that I have not even the slightest attachment to wealth.'

The goddess's reply brimmed with affection: 'Son! I know the state of your mind. But you and I are bound to the rule of karma. I will stay with you for some time till the effects of your good deeds wane. Please do not object to that.' The ascetic replied: 'Mother! Who can stop your divine play? Let your will prevail. But I have a request. It is better if you inform me before your grace upon me is withdrawn.' The goddess acceded to the ascetic's request. She disappeared after saying that her grace was upon the ascetic from that instant.

The ascetic thought: 'Even good deeds are golden chains that bind one. When the grace of Goddess Lakshmi leaves me, I would be free from the last bondage too.'

The ascetic bathed as usual in a river near the cliff. When he came to the shore after bathing, he saw that the earth in front of him had cracked open and a big heap of gold coins had come out of it. Seeing this, the ascetic thought of the divine play of the goddess and smiled to himself. The gold coins did not create any disturbance in his mind. Not even touching them, he left for his abode on the cliff.



Near that cliff was a big city named Rajshekha, which was the capital of the kingdom of Parantaka. The ascetic remembered the words of the goddess: 'The king and the common people would praise you and revere you.' He thought: 'Let us test if the goddess's words come true.' This idea seemed like a play to his childlike mind. And so, the ascetic left the cliff and went to King Parantaka's palace. At that time, the king was sitting on his throne. The courtroom was filled with ministers, army generals, and common people. The king was discussing matters of the state with the members of his government.

It was at this time that the ascetic rushed into the courtroom. Everyone stood up as a mark of respect. The king too, got up from his throne and proceeded to welcome the ascetic with folded hands. All eyes were fixed on the ascetic. King Parantaka welcomed the ascetic and prostrated before him. The ascetic remembered Goddess Lakshmi's words: 'No danger will befall you till my grace is upon you.' He thought of testing this assurance and kicked the head of the king who was prostrating in front of him. The king's golden crown went flying to a great distance.

That was it! The ascetic's action created a great commotion in the courtroom. The soldiers drew their swords in order to kill the ascetic. Everyone present there thought: 'The king will surely chop off the ascetic's head for having done this outrageous act.' The entire courtroom was shaking in fright for some moments. The king was perplexed at the ascetic's actions. The ascetic thought that the king will order that his legs be cut off. Goddess Lakshmi saw the intentions and actions of the ascetic. Lest any danger should befall him or lest someone should insult him, she performed a miracle. And because of her miraculous power, the very next moment, a cobra came out hissing from the king's crown that had fallen apart.

Seeing the cobra, the king and the others present there thought: 'Somehow, this snake has entered the king's crown. The king has worn the crown without noticing this. This ascetic who lives in the forest is an omniscient saint who knows the past, present, and the future. To prevent the king's death due to snake-bite, the ascetic himself has come in search of the king.'

Everyone's anger at the ascetic vanished. In its stead, there arose a wave of gratitude for him. Everyone started revering him as the great soul who had saved their king. They saluted him with folded hands and prostrated before him. Overwhelmed with gratitude, the king was too emotional to speak. He prostrated at the ascetic's feet over and again. He said in a faltering voice with eyes full of tears: 'O Lord! It is my great fortune that you came here like God. Because of your grace, I have been saved from death.'

The queen, the courtiers, and common people fell prostrate at the ascetic's feet. The entire country praised and saluted the ascetic calling him 'the great sage who saved the king's life.' The ascetic realised: 'I should have been, in reality, punished for having kicked the king. But, because of the goddess's grace, I am getting praises instead of punishment.' The king expressed his gratitude by organising a procession of the ascetic on the royal elephant with attendants fanning him and with musical instruments accompanying the procession. All the while, the ascetic marvelled at the grace of the goddess and her divine play.

The procession ended with great pomp. The ascetic expressed his desire to return to his abode on the cliff. The king was unwilling to part with him and prayed to him to stay in the palace and bestow his blessings upon all. The ascetic too accepted the king's proposal thinking: 'Let us see how far the divine play of the goddess goes.'

(To be continued)

REVIEWS

For review in PRABUDDHA BHARATA,
publishers need to send **two** copies of their latest publications



Reimagining the Sacred

Eds. Richard Kearney and
Jens Zimmermann

Columbia University Press, 61 West
62 Street, New York, NY 10023, USA.
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9780231161039.

Ever since Western philosophers declared the demise of God, the Prime Deity, the debates are unending. Perhaps, this phenomenon is not as virulent as in the 'West'. By and large, the South-asian areas still adhere to the religions they inherited. The major religions in the 'East' continue to have considerable following. Newton, Marx, Freud—the (un)holy trinity, in their own impervious way debunked and dismissed the God phenomenon. Now we have a 'revival'—it seems—at least in the intellectual / philosophical segments.

One such study is the book under review. 'Sacred' in the title, instead of God, is a pointer. For, the theme is: Death of the Death of God. Or 'Anatheism'. 'Returning to God after God' (7). This is in the format of conversations monitored by Richard Kearney who has remarkable inwardness with the theme. Among the scholars who 'debate God' I could recognise Julia Kristeva and John Caputo.

The basic intention of Kearney's volume is to explore what is termed as anatheism. And Ana's dictionary meaning is 'Up in space or time; back again, anew' (6) applied to God after God. In short, and in a sense the dead God is exhumed through a debate. As Professor Kearney puts it: 'Anatheism, in its temporal aspect, does indeed coincide today with a concrete historical situation that comes after the death of God, culturally, socially, and intellectually. It is marked by the modern announcements of Nietzsche, Marx, and Freud' (9). In short, "disenchantment" of the world, the desacralizing of society, the general malaise of the abandonment of God, loss of faith' (ibid.).

Much more intelligibly, Kearney says: 'What I am trying to suggest with the notion of anatheism is that the sacred can be experienced in and through the secular' (17). In short, 'sacralize the secular and secularize the sacred. It is reimagining the sacred after the secular and through the secular' (ibid.). In Sanskrit, the two known as *laukika* and *paralaukika*—secular and the sacred.

One of the fascinating aspects of the debate—in one form or the other—is the persistence of evil in a God-controlled world. In the conversation with Catherine Keller we have the usual ambiguity of love in all religions integrally found in the presence of evil. 'Are there not actual evil acts, such as torture and rape, that are outside of God?' (47). There is a catch: there are conclusive statements, for evil is within the domain of God. Thomas Aquinas, in his massive volume exclusively on *Evil* says at one point:

Good has the character of being desirable, since good is what everything desires, as the Ethics [of Aristotle] says, and by the same reasoning, evil has the character of being something to be avoided. But something negatively designated may be naturally desired, and something affirmatively designated may be naturally avoided. For example, sheep naturally flee from the presence of wolves and desire their absence. Therefore, good is no more an entity than evil is (Thomas Aquinas, *On Evil* (New York: Oxford University, 2003), 57).

The complexity of determining love and evil is, explicitly or implicitly, one of the areas that figure in this volume. However, we also should note what Catherine Keller suggests: evil is an inclusive phenomenon: 'It is also the God of the nonhuman universe, where prediction and suffering run through the fabric of biology' (49). This does not mean that 'suffering is God's *will* for any creature, human or inhuman' (ibid.). Yet, 'there is an element of risk' (ibid.).

My focussing on evil is with the assumption

that it is a container of all that is (mis)understood as negative. In this area, one feels that the most transparent and comprehensive views emerge from Julia Kristeva. The stark truths of our—eminently undesirable—globalisation are there to see. ‘We are in the outpouring of a death drive. I return to these outpourings of violence that one calls in another sense “revolt”, while, on the contrary, it is about a more radical phase of nihilism that is brewing below conflict of religions’ (110).

It is unfair to cite only a few writers: but the key disturbances need more transparency. To continue Kristeva: ‘This explosion of violence is more serious because it grasps the impulses of civilization in a more profound way—the destruction of this prereligious need to believe, which is constitutive of mental life with and for other people’ (ibid.). Citing ‘gangster-fundamentalism’ we are left with ‘the disintegrated and desocialized adolescent’ (111). In short, ‘the death drive alone triumphs, the malignancy of evil’ (ibid.).

Reimagining the Sacred is a profound, timely compendium of contemporary phenomenon of the sacred, seen and discussed with an urgency that is implicitly shown.

Prof. M Sivaramkrishna
Former Chair, Department of English,
Osmania University, Hyderabad

***Swami Vivekananda's Ideas and Our Times:
A Retrospect On His 150th Birth Anniversary***

Eds. Sandipan Sen, Swarup Roy, Brahmachari Subrata, Jaisankar Chattopadhyay, and Swami Shastrajnananda

Ramakrishna Mission Vidyamandira, Belur Math, Howrah, West Bengal 711202. 2015. 323 pp. ₹ 300. HB. ISBN 9788192811031.



The recent couple of years have seen God’s plenty in publications on Swami Vivekananda. But they have not exhausted even a portion of his personality for he contained many worlds. While almost all the publications have been released as solid and attractive books, the choice imagination

of the editors of *Swami Vivekananda's Ideas and Our Times* is an added joy. Yes, the cover is enough to intrigue us first; and when we learn what it is that we notice, our palms are automatically gathered in salutation. It is a sketch by Sri Ramakrishna with a message that is a piece of uncanny vision. I leave it to the reader to get the book and find out the golden prophecy: *Jai Radhe!*

This volume, a compilation of seminar presentations and a few invited articles, is flagged off by Sandipan Sen’s Preface. Swamiji had envisioned a seat of higher learning integrating the *gurukula* system as well as the Western model in 1898 and named it a temple of learning. The Vidyamandira was inaugurated in 1941. However, there were other areas in Swamiji’s vision: religion, social work, philosophy, and economic thought. How about linking his vision with globalisation? Though Gwilym Beckerlegge takes his own time to zero in on the subject, he does make a point regarding Swamiji’s ‘philosophy of a universal religion, which claims to transcend containment within one tradition’ (223), the possibilities of East and West coming together to mark the triumph of global communication and global trade. We will do well to remember that ‘Vivekananda’s Vedantic philosophy prompted him to comment that the underlying ontological identity would lead the world into a greater state of unity’ (229). As clearly formulated is Dennis Dalton’s detailed essay on Swamiji’s philosophical influence on Sri Aurobindo.

There are other carefully thought-out papers on different themes in the volume by Swami Bhajanananda, Swami Tattwamayananda, Swami Sanmayananda, and Jayasree Mukherjee, among others. A special thanks to Arun Ghose for a very beautiful article on Swamiji’s ideas on art. The essay is a perfect introduction to the appreciation of art for the common reader. Swamiji rises as a *shilpacharya*, master sculptor, who could sport a critical eye when needed. *Swami Vivekananda's Ideas and Our Times* is thus a set of very important essays both for the common reader and for the student who wants to undertake research in any particular field associated with Swamiji, truly a Renaissance Man.

Prema Nandakumar
Researcher and Literary Critic
Srirangam

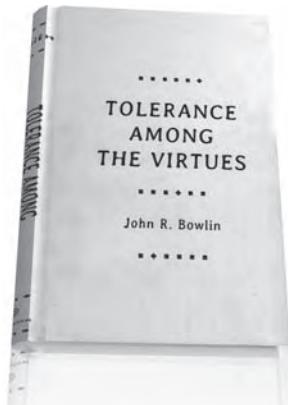
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Tolerance Among The Virtues

John R Bowlin

Princeton University Press, 41 William Street, Princeton, New Jersey 08540. USA. 2016. 265 pp. \$39.50. HB. ISBN 9780691169972.



DURING THE SPRING OF 2000 I attended a cockfight in Collinsville, Oklahoma. I tell the tale of that visit and reflect on its significance in the epilogue, but here the point regards the confusion and puzzlement it precipitated. I went to Collinsville as a citizen seeking information about an activity that many in the state wanted to ban. A referendum was scheduled for later that year, and I had never seen a fight. My hunch was that I would vote against the ban in solidarity with the rural and Native peoples who opposed it. But I was mistaken. In fact, I found the fights horrific in their seductive violence and vile in their visible effects. I left Collinsville thinking that the proponents of the referendum were right. Cockfighting was intolerable; a ban would be best.

This judgement was unexpected and disorienting. It caught me off guard, and after a week I came to doubt it. Or rather, I came to doubt that I understood it well enough to maintain it. Did my conclusion that cockfighting was unbearable bear witness to my own intolerance? Intolerance is a vice. Its act wrongs other another person. It denies them a good they are due. (But what was that good and under what conditions was it due? I didn't know.) Did this mean that my refusal to honor this request for tolerance was somehow unjust? More troubling still was another thought: was the solidarity I felt for my fellow citizens who

led rural lives and claimed Native identities in fact false? Did my refusal to tolerate this violent and (to my mind) objectionable portion of their local traditions signal my own smooth hypocrisy? Was my claim to solidarity more apparent than real? And then the worst thought of all: was I being played? In the stories of tolerance that we tell, hardscrabble towns in the American Bible Belt are not its natural home, and yet toleration was precisely what the members of cockfight clubs across the state were asking from people like me, urban and suburban inhabitants of Tulsa and Oklahoma City. Was their request as much a semblance as my solidarity? Was it a mask that they would remove once they secured the tolerance they wanted but would never offer in return?

After a while I tried to revise my judgement, muster some tolerance, and so escape these discomforts, but this didn't work. The act was too difficult, its odd combination of objection and endurance, and besides it felt wrong. To my mind, cockfighting wasn't just objectionable, but intolerable. So I tried indifference. I tried not caring about cockfighting, about the tasks of citizenship, and about the solidarity I felt, whether real or imagined. But this didn't work either. Like Augustine so many centuries before, I had *seen* a cockfight. I had chosen to attend, and I had been captivated by its spectacle, its strange combination of violence and beauty.

Initial Discoveries

The truth is, I didn't know how to tell the tale of that trip to Collinsville, to say what I had seen and give an account of its significance. So I did what I have been trained to do. I read around in the relevant literature, some of it scholarly, some of it not. My reading led to a course, the course to a handful of articles, and the articles to this book. It also led to three initial discoveries. First, I discovered that my discontent was widespread. Whatever I read, wherever I turned, there it was. Journalists, theologians, moral philosophers, hipster youth pastors, political theorists, popes, radical critics, college evangelists, political operatives, and scholars of religion—all could be found deplored the resort to toleration in response to the differences that divide us, resenting the praise this act so often receives, and resisting the thought that a virtue might be its cause. The sources of their discontent turn out to be multiple, and yet as we shall see in chapter 1, criticism of tolerance and its source, typically functions as a medium of discontent with modernity. By these lights, toleration is a distinctively modern response to disagreement and difference, and its ills are variations on modernity's own. When it is endorsed nevertheless, the act must be replaced with some other response. A just political society will leave it behind. A community of hospitality and welcome will proceed without it.

Of course, I also discovered friends of toleration, those who endorse the act, praise its performance, and admire its prominence in modern lives and politics. Still, whatever I read, wherever I turned, there was very little talk of virtue that perfects resort to this act, even among its friends. This was my second key discovery. Tolerance is infrequently theorized as a virtue, as a habitual perfection of action and attitude. Few make the effort; some even deny that tolerance is virtue. Instead, most scholars and critics, friends and

foes alike, have subjected the *act* of toleration to scrutiny, the act of patiently enduring a person, action, or attitude that is thought to be objectionable in some way, and this has put the debate on precisely the wrong footing. As we shall see, an act of toleration can be good or bad, right or wrong, depending on the ends and circumstances of the act. Some objectionable differences should be patiently endured; others should not. But this means that those who care deeply about certain resorts to the act, who defend those resorts as right and required, and who, as a result, are inclined to declare the act itself essentially good will be accused of moral blindness by those who concentrate on examples of the act that fall short of the right. So too, those who nagged or coerced to endure what they consider intolerable and who, as a result, are inclined to declare the act itself essentially bad, will be counted among the intolerant by those who consider the act essentially just and good. So goes the contemporary debate, or at least a good portion of it: misguided judgements about the moral status of the act in general are used as proxies, as smokescreens, in debates over specific instances of the tolerable and the intolerable, over what should and should not be patiently endured, while the virtue that attends to this distinction is hardly considered.

Given the sources and motivations that have shaped the revival of virtue theory in recent years, this might seem understandable. That revival has, for the most part, looked to premodern accounts for inspiration, to the ancients and medievals. If toleration is, as most assume, a modern response to the moral and political challenges posed by diversity and difference, then we should not expect the revivalists to care about the virtue that causes right resort to this act. They don't find it in the premodern sources they borrow and adapt; they don't even look. 

REPORTS

New Mission Centre

Ramakrishna Vedanta Centre, Lusaka, Zambia, has been re-affiliated to Ramakrishna Mission. The centre's address is 'Ramakrishna Vedanta Centre, Plot 8100, Nsunzu Road, PO Box 31332, Lusaka, Zambia', mobile phone: 260-950597374 and email:<lusaka@rkmm.org>.

News of Branch Centres

Sri V Shanmuganathan, Governor of Meghalaya, inaugurated the secondary school building at Shella sub-centre of **Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Cherrapunjee** on 4 July 2016.

Swami Suhitananda, General Secretary, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, inaugurated the dispensary and multigym buildings at **Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Hatinuniguda** on 10 August.

On the holy occasion of Krishna Pushkaram, a festival of the River Krishna which occurs once in twelve years, **Ramakrishna Mission, Vijayawada** distributed food, buttermilk, and milk to about 2.20 lakh pilgrims, and provided accommodation to about 2,500 pilgrims, from 12 to 23 August. The centre also conducted spiritual discourses and cultural programmes on this occasion.

Celebration of the 150th Birth Anniversary of Sister Nivedita

India: Antpur Math conducted a youths' convention on 31 July in which 85 youths participated, and a devotees' convention on 7 August which was attended by 211 people.

Indore Ashrama held a spiritual retreat on 14 August in which about 125 devotees took part.

Jammu centre conducted a special programme comprising speeches and demonstration

of Yogasanans on 14 August. About 130 school students took part in the programme.

Malda centre held a spiritual retreat on 21 August which was attended by about 400 devotees.

Nagpur Math conducted a special lecture on 6 August which was attended by 125 people.

Pune Math held a convention for college-going women on 13 August which was inaugurated by Sri C Vidyasagar Rao, Governor of Maharashtra. On the next day a convention for working women was held. In all, about 700 women participated in the conventions.

Shillong centre conducted cultural competitions in July participated by 3,200 students from 120 schools and colleges in East Khasi Hills district. Prizes were given to 280 winners on 6 August.

Swamiji's Ancestral House held a lecture on 19 August which was attended by 250 people.

Outside India: Malaysia centre held special lectures, cultural programmes, and a film show on 6 and 7 August. Sri T S Tirumurti, High Commissioner of India to Malaysia, and about 200 devotees attended the programmes.

Singapore centre conducted a devotional music programme and a spiritual retreat on 8 and 9 August respectively.

***Swachchha Bharat Abhiyan* (Clean India Campaign)**

Coimbatore Mission centre held six cleaning programmes in August in which students from the various institutions run by the centre cleaned premises of a temple, a hospital, a government office, and a few public roads.

Ghatshila Ashrama conducted cleaning drives on 21 and 27 July around the Ashrama campus and a local market area.

Kankurgachhi centre held a cleanliness programme on 31 July in a nearby locality.

Naora Math conducted a few cleanliness drives from 26 to 30 June in which about 700 students from different coaching centres cleaned religious places, a playground, and other public places.

Values Education and Youth-related Programmes Conducted by Centres in India

Hyderabad Math held a residential youth camp from 1 to 3 July in which 250 youths participated.

Koyilandy centre conducted a youth camp on 29 May in which 83 youths took part.

Port Blair centre arranged two values education workshops on 20 and 21 July in which about 450 students and teachers participated.

Rajamahendravaram centre held a youth convention on 31 July in which 1,250 youths took part.

Vadodara centre conducted a youth convention from 3 to 5 July in which 650 youths from 15 states participated.

Relief

Flood Relief: **India: Bihar: Chapra** centre distributed 2,800 kg rice flakes and 600 kg molasses among 986 flood-affected families in Revelganj and Sadar blocks in Saran district from 24 to 30 August. **Patna** centre distributed 10,200 kg rice flakes, 2,700 kg molasses, 2,700 kg gram flour, 2,700 kg salt, 650 l of fruit juice, 16,200 candles, and 13,500 matchboxes among 2,700 families in Maner and Fatuwa blocks of Patna district from 25 to 28 August. **Uttar Pradesh: Allahabad** centre distributed 1,020 kg rice flakes, 500 kg molasses, 25 kg milk powder, 1,248 packets of biscuits, 1,020 bottles of drinking water, 60 saris, and 40 T-shirts among 707 affected families in various areas of Allahabad district on 24 and 25 August. **West Bengal: Antpur** centre distributed 30,600 kg rice flakes and 450 kg sugar among

8,610 affected families in 32 villages of Udaynarayanpur block in Howrah district and Jangipara block in Hooghly district from 25 to 28 August. **Cooch Behar** centre distributed 51 saris, 100 dhotis, 81 shirts, and assorted fruits among 147 affected families in Patla Khawa village in Cooch Behar district on 20 July. **Bangladesh: Dhaka** centre distributed 700 kg rice, 175 kg dal, 175 l of edible oil, 350 kg potatoes, 1,050 ORS packets, and 350 saris among 350 affected families in various areas of Kurigram district on 12 August. **Nepal: Kathmandu** centre distributed 1,590 kg rice among 636 flood-affected families in Pathamari area in Jhapa district from 28 to 31 July.

Winter Relief: The following centres distributed various items, as shown against their names, among poor and needy people: **Jalpaiguri:** 51 jackets on 12 and 18 August. **Ootacamund:** 867 sweaters, 491 sweatshirts, 880 jackets, and 48 flat-knit tops from 25 July to 11 August.

Distress Relief: The following centres distributed various items, as shown against their names, to needy people: **Cooch Behar:** 996 shirts and 498 pants from 14 to 21 August. **Dehradun:** 5,555 shirts and 2,057 pants from 3 May to 29 June. **Jalpaiguri:** 815 shirts and 468 pants on 12 and 18 August. **Kailashahar:** 403 shirts, 279 pants, and 660 women's dresses from 29 May to 31 July. **Lalgarh:** 52 adults' garments, 30 children's garments, 673 *uttariyas* (upper wrappers), 21 towels, 8 bed-sheets, and 21 chaddars from 3 June to 9 August. **Nagpur:** 1,018 school uniforms, 1,964 notebooks, and 982 pens from 9 July to 3 August. **Naora:** 568 textbooks among 125 students on 9 July and 12 August. **Ootacamund:** 1,516 shirts, 127 T-shirts, 1,220 pants, 485 tunics, and 500 tops from 25 July to 11 August. **Ponnampet:** 3,005 shirts, 1,508 pants, and 2,999 sweaters from 13 February to 19 August. **Rahara:** 747 shirts and 148 pants from 8 May to 20 July. **Shivanhalli:** 6,000 shirts and 3,000 pants from 10 to 30

March. **Vrindaban**: 1,600 mosquito-nets from 10 to 17 August.

Drought Rehabilitation: Telangana: Hyderabad centre installed a reverse osmosis plant at Laxmi Reddy Guda village in Ranga Reddy district on 21 August.

Economic Rehabilitation: Odisha: Puri Mission centre handed over 10 hand-carts to poor and needy people on 26 August.

Synopsis of the Ramakrishna Mission Governing Body's Report for 2015-16

The 107th Annual General Meeting of the Ramakrishna Mission was held at Belur Math on Sunday, 18 December 2016 at 3.30 p.m.

The Government of West Bengal selected Ramakrishna Mission for the Banga Bibhushan Award, 2015, in recognition of its service to the betterment of society. 'Sound of Joy', an animation film based on Swami Vivekananda's childhood, produced as a project by the Headquarters to commemorate Swami Vivekananda's 150th birth anniversary, was adjudged the Best Animation Film by the jury of the 62nd National Film Awards.

150th birth anniversaries of Swami Saradananda, Swami Trigunatitananda, and Sister Nivedita were celebrated in different centres by conducting various celebrations.

New branch centres of the Ramakrishna Mission were started at **Gurap** in West Bengal, **Imphal** in Manipur, **Kailashahar** in Tripura, and **Tirupati** in Andhra Pradesh. The sub-centres at **Bamunmura** and **Mekhliganj** were made full-fledged centres of Ramakrishna Math. **Lalgarh** Ashrama, which was a retreat centre under the supervision of the Headquarters, was also made a full-fledged branch centre of Ramakrishna Math. Outside India, a new combined branch centre of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission was started at **Rangpur** in Bangladesh.

In educational field, the following new developments deserve special mention: (i) **Coimbatore Mission** started three short-term add-on courses for third-year students as a part of Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) Scheme, commenced Bachelor of Vocational Degree courses, and launched 'IJAPEY' (International Journal of Adapted Physical Education and Yoga), a monthly online journal. (ii) The University of Calcutta granted permission to start Vivekananda Centre for Research to conduct M.Phil/Ph.D courses in **Narendrapur** centre. (iii) 'Swami Vivekananda Centre for Multidisciplinary Research in Basic Science and Social Sciences' started to function at Vivekananda Centenary College of **Rahara** centre. (iv) **Ranchi Morabadi** centre started Secondary and Senior Secondary courses affiliated to National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS).

In medical field, the following new developments deserve special mention: (i) **Agartala** centre conducted Mobile Medical Outreach camps under NUHM in the slums of Agartala Municipal Corporation. (ii) Telemedicine facility at **Lucknow** hospital was declared open. (iii) **Seva Pratishthan**, Kolkata, constructed a six-storey diagnostic and cardiac care centre building with Catheterisation Laboratory, CCU, HDU, CTVS-ITU. The centre introduced 'Emergency Trauma Care Life Support' course.

In rural development field, the following new projects deserve special mention: (i) **Narainpur** centre converted 10 Anganwadis to one-teacher pre-basic school (Ekal Vidyalaya). (ii) **Narendrapur** centre initiated a Green College at Santuri village of **Purulia** district covering 12 courses focussing on various issues of the green sector. (iii) **Purulia** Vidyapith installed 11 tube wells in 8 villages and conducted 6 agricultural camps. (iv) **Ranchi Morabadi** centre constructed 7 recharge tanks, 27 percolation tanks, 1 gravity

irrigation system, and 2 bora-bunds for soil and water conservation and irrigation. (v) **Sargachhi** centre constructed a greenhouse (polyhouse) and a seed net house for demonstration and production of high value crops. (vi) **Silchar** centre started a tailoring training centre for women at Maynagarh village in Cachar district.

The different centres took forward Swachchha Bharat Abhiyan, launched by the Government of India, by holding cleanliness programmes; the following deserve special mention: (i) The polytechnic of **Chennai Students' Home** held five cleaning programmes in which several streets and other public places were cleaned. (ii) **Mangaluru** centre launched Swachchha Mangaluru, a cleanliness drive, on 1 February 2015. In the first phase, the centre conducted 40 cleaning programmes in 40 different parts of the city. (iii) Lokasiksha Parishad of **Narendrapur** centre with the support of UNICEF launched a WASH (Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene) programme in Purulia.

Under the Math, the following new projects deserve special mention: (i) The newly constructed vocational-training-cum-production centre of **Baghbazar** Math located at Pranakrishna Mukherjee Lane, Kolkata, was inaugurated. (ii) A holographic film on India's cultural history was released at Vivekanandar Illam (Vivekananda House) of **Chennai Math**. (iii) **Ghatshila** Math constructed a dispensary building. (iv) **Gourhati** Math built a dispensary building. (iv) **Thiruvananthapuram** centre renovated the hospital building and added a Panchakarma centre and Kalari, a traditional form of treatment to the Ayurveda department. (v) **Antpur, Baghbazar and Nagpur** centres took forward Swachchha Bharat Abhiyan, launched by the Government of India, by holding various cleanliness programmes.

Outside India, the following new developments deserve special mention: (i) The

Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Bhava Prasar Sam-sad was started in Bangladesh. **Dhaka** (Bangladesh) centre held the concluding function of the centenary celebration of its high school. (ii) Sarada Kindergarten of **Singapore** centre received Reading Innovation Award (Distinction) from National Library Board, Ministry of Communications and Information, Singapore. (iii) Sri Narendra Modi, Prime Minister of India, unveiled the bronze statue of Swami Vivekananda at **Malaysia** centre.

During the year, the Mission undertook welfare work by way of providing scholarships to poor students, and pecuniary help to old, sick and destitute people. Number of beneficiaries: 22.70 lakh; Expenditure incurred: Rs. 16.85 crore.

Medical service was rendered to more than 61.02 lakh people through 10 hospitals, 77 dispensaries, 42 mobile medical units, and 910 medical camps; expenditure incurred Rs. 191.48 crore.

Nearly 3.12 lakh students were studying in our educational institutions from kindergarten to university level, non-formal education centres, night schools, and coaching classes. A sum of Rs. 284.96 crore was spent on educational work.

A number of rural and tribal development projects were undertaken with a total expenditure of Rs. 58.66 crore benefiting about 86.51 lakh rural people.

The Mission and Math undertook several relief and rehabilitation programmes in different parts of the country involving an expenditure of Rs. 36.78 crore, benefiting 7.28 lakh people of 2.21 lakh families.

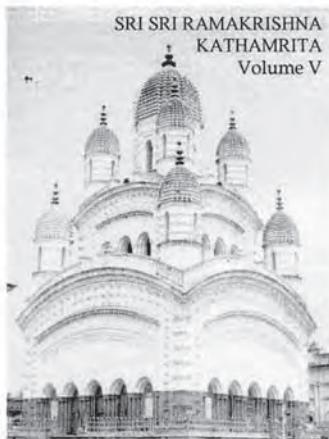
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(Swami Suhitananda)

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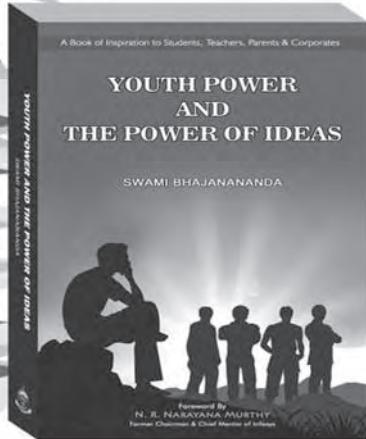
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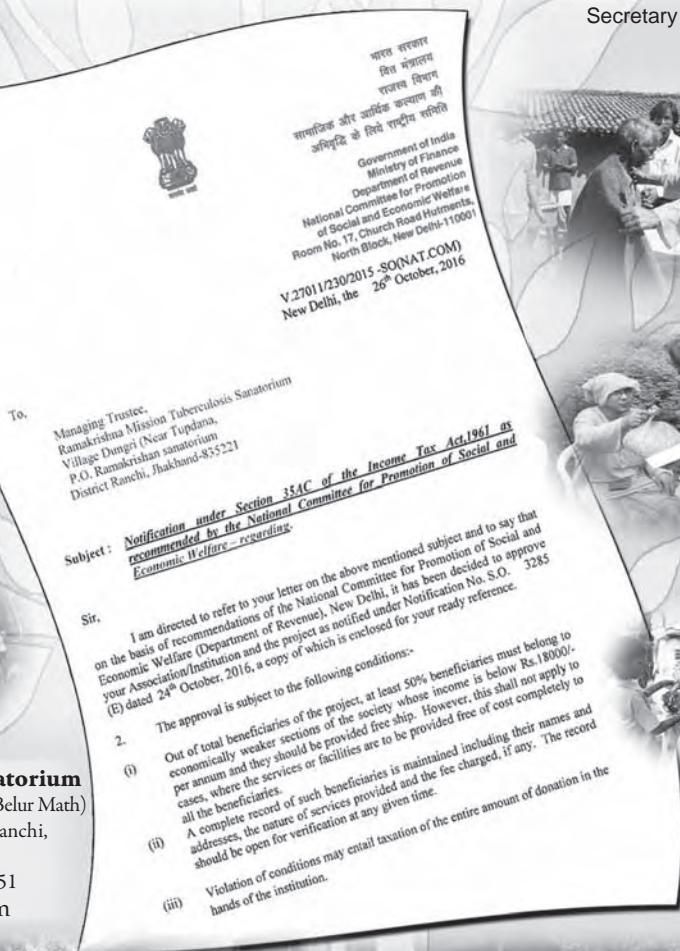


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Swami Buddhadevananda
Secretary



Ramakrishna Mission TB Sanatorium
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Phone : 9431170005, 8902415051
Email : rkmtbs@gmail.com



We want to lead mankind to the place where there is neither the Vedas, nor the Bible, nor the Koran; yet this has to be done by harmonising the Vedas, the Bible and the Koran.

Mankind ought to be taught that religions are but the varied expressions of THE RELIGION, which is Oneness, so that each may choose the path that suits him best.

Swami Vivekananda



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Each soul is potentially divine.
The goal is to manifest this
Divinity within.

Strength is life, weakness is
death.

Fear nothing, stop at nothing.
You will be like lions. We must
rouse India and the whole
world.

Never say, 'No', never say, 'I
cannot', for you are infinite.

—Swami Vivekananda



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SRI SARADA MATH RASIK BHITA

24/1, R. N. Tagore Road,
Dakshineswar, Kolkata-700035
Ph. (033)2564 9824, (033)2544 4999
website: www.srisaradamatrb.org



An Appeal

Sri Sarada Math - Rasik Bhita is the educational and cultural unit of Sri Sarada Math, Headquarters situated at the holy place where lived Rasik, the legendary sweeper of Dakshineswar Kali temple.

Keeping in mind Swami Vivekananda's call for aiming at manifesting the full potential of every member of our society, Rasik Bhita has come up with a 5 point holistic development programme to pave the way for both the inner and outer growth of the girl students. **From a handful of girls in 2001, the institute has blossomed into around 1300 students of which 25% are given training free of cost, others being charged a nominal fee.** Rasik Bhita also provides training in Communicative English through video conferencing to remote villages in West Bengal free of cost.

Placement: In collaboration with Tata Consultancy Services and m-Junction, Rasik Bhita has been providing training to enable students to secure employment. Till today, approximately 350 students of Rasik Bhita have been placed in the non-voice BPO sector of TCS and over the last few years, many more students have been placed in various reputed companies.

PRESENT REQUIREMENT: Due to expansion of multifarious activities, the number of students getting enrolled at Rasik Bhita has increased considerably over the last few years. **To continue the activities in a proper and better way, Rasik Bhita immediately needs to buy vacant plots and house, adjacent to Rasik Bhita, the cost of which is approximately Rs. 4 crores.** For this, we earnestly seek the financial help and support of all well-wishers, friends and organizations.

Cheques/drafts in favour of Sri Sarada Math along with a covering letter addressed to the In-charge, Sri Sarada Math-Rasik Bhita mentioning that the donation is meant for the Land and Building Fund will be thankfully acknowledged. Funds may also be transferred directly to the bank account of Rasik Bhita, vide e-mail rasikbhita10@gmail.com for bank details. Donations to the Math are exempt from Income Tax u/s 80G of the I.T. Act, 1961. The Math is also registered under the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, 2010.



The best guide in life is strength.
In religion, as in all other matters,
discard everything that weakens
you, have nothing to do with it.

—Swami Vivekananda



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Swami Vivekananda's statue
at Museum, RKM New Delhi

Regd. Off. & Fact. : Plot No.88 & 89, Phase - II,
Sipcot Industrial Complex, Ranipet - 632 403, Tamil Nadu.
Phone : 04172 - 244820, 651507, Tele Fax : 04172 - 244820
E-mail : rao@svisslabss.net Web Site : www.svisslabss.net

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